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THE FUTURE OF SOCIALISM: III

The Perspective Now

ARTHUR M. SCHLESINGER, JR.

THE SOVIET EXPERIENCE has put the century-old debate between capitalism and socialism in a useful new perspective. Before the First World War, the case against socialism was generally made in terms of efficiency, the case against capitalism in terms of morality: that is, socialism was conceded to be good in principle but not to work; capitalism was conceded to work but not to be good in principle. After the Second War, we see a reverse tendency—a disposition to admit the inefficiency of capitalism and justify it as providing the margin on which liberty and democracy may subsist; a disposition to believe that the very efficiency of socialist management necessarily squeezes out freedom. After all, which system has more successfully dehumanized the worker, fettered the working class, and extinguished personal and political liberty?

The very shift in polemics suggests that both arguments have indulged in what Whitehead has called the fallacy of misplaced concreteness—the error of mistaking abstractions for concrete realities. The fact probably is that a great many of the criticisms urged against the abstractions "capitalism" and "socialism" alike are actually the defects, not of a particular system of ownership, but of industrial organization and the postindustrial state whatever the system of ownership. Industry and government are the basic evils; they institutionalize the pride and the greed, the sadism and the masochism, the ecstasy in power and the ecstasy in submission, which are the abiding causes of the troubles of the world.

In this light anarchism becomes the only faith for a moral man. Organization is man's solution to his sense of guilt. The very fact of organization attenuates personal moral responsibility; and, as organization becomes more elaborate and comprehensive, it becomes increasingly the instrumentality through which moral man indulges his natural desire to commit immoral deeds. "A crime which would press heavily on the conscience of one man, becomes quite endurable when divided among many." The state is only the climax of secular

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organizations—that "semihuman tiger or ox, stalking over the earth," Thoreau called it, "with its heart taken out and the top of its brain shot away"—and the totalitarian state concentrates in itself all the evil of organization by annihilating all the gaps and rivalries which make for freedom in a more loosely organized society.

The socialist state is thus worse than the capitalist state because it is more inclusive in its coverage and more unlimited in its power. Organization corrupts; total organization corrupts totally. The socialist state justifies itself on the ground that the concentration of power is necessary to do good; but it has never solved the problem of how you insure that power bestowed to do good will not be employed to do harm, especially when you remove all obstacles to its exercise. Soviet socialism has the added disadvantage that it was born in violence. The emotions of revolution in an industrial age can no more be localized than the emotions of modern war itself. Violence breeds its special hatreds and aggressions, which twist the normal hatreds of society into new and ugly forms. The habit of violence is hard to abandon, especially when it has worked in the past. A revolutionary elite always has the wistful conviction, based on experience, that it is easier to dispose of opposition by firing squads than by arguments.

The trouble with anarchism is, not at all that it is wrong, but that it is irrelevant. It may have its values as a mystique, but it is nonsense as a way of meeting the explosive problems of an atomic age. Its overt expressions, such as conscientious objection in times of war, tend to be morally vulgar and intellectually contemptible. Industrial organization and the postindustrial state are here to stay. The problem is not how to escape them but how to master them—or, more probably, how to live with them.

Is Democratic Socialism Possible?

Neither Communism, with its despotism, nor capitalism, with its instability, nor fascism, with its combination of the two, provide attractive solutions to the problem of how to live with modern industry and the modern state. Is there another possibility? Has non-Communist, libertarian socialism a future? Abstracting the question for a moment from current political actualities, one must answer that there is no inherent reason why democratic socialism should not be possible.

If socialism (i.e., the ownership by the state of all significant means of production) is to preserve democracy, it must be brought

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about step by step in a way which will not disrupt the fabric of custom, law, and mutual confidence upon which personal rights depend. That is, the transition must be piecemeal; it must be parliamentary; it must respect civil liberties and due process of law. Socialism by such means used to seem fantastic to the hard-eyed melodramatists of the Leninist persuasion; but even Stalin is reported to have told Harold Laski recently that it might be possible.

The classical argument against gradualism was that the capitalist ruling class would resort to violence rather than surrender its prerogatives. Here, as elsewhere, the Marxists enormously overestimated the political courage and will of the capitalists. In fact, in the countries where capitalism really triumphed, it has yielded with far better grace (that is, displayed far more cowardice) than the Marxist schema predicted. The British experience is illuminating in this respect, and the American experience not uninstructive. There is no sign in either nation that the capitalists are putting up a really determined fight. Liberal alarmists who feel that the clamor of a political campaign or the agitation of hired lobbyists constitutes a determined fight should read the history of Germany. In the United States an industrialist who turned a machine gun on a picket line would be disowned by the rest of the business community; in Britain he would be sent to an insane asylum. Fascism arises in countries like Germany and Italy, Spain and Argentina, where the bourgeois triumph was never complete enough to eradicate other elements who believe in what the bourgeoisie fears more than anything else—violence, and who then used violence to "protect" the bourgeoisie.

There seems no inherent obstacle to the gradual advance of socialism in the United States through a series of New Deals. In 1933, Frances Perkins has reported, the coal operators pleaded with the government to nationalize the mines. They offered to sell "to the government at any price fixed by the government. Anything so we can get out of it." The government was not ready to take over the coal mines in 1933, as it was not ready to take over the banks, as it was not ready to keep the railroads in 1919. But the New Deal greatly enlarged the reserves of trained personnel; the mobilization of industry during the war provided more experience; and the next depression will certainly mean a vast expansion in government ownership and control. The private owners will not only acquiesce in this. In characteristic capitalist panic, they will demand it.

Government ownership and control can take many forms. The independent public corporation, in the manner of TVA, is one;

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state and municipal ownership can exist alongside federal ownership; the techniques of the co-operatives can be expanded; even the resources of regulation have not been fully tapped. The more varieties of ownership the better: liberty gets more fresh air and sunlight through the interstices of a diversified society than through the close-knit grip of collectivism. The recipe for retaining liberty is, not rationalization, but muddling through—a secret long known to the British who, as D. W. Brogan has put it, "change anything except the appearance of things."

Socialism, then, appears quite practicable within this frame of reference, as a long-term proposition. Its gradual advance might well preserve order and law, keep enough internal checks and discontinuities to guarantee a measure of freedom, and evolve new and real forms for the expression of democracy. The active agents in effecting the transition will probably be, not the working class, but some combination of lawyers, business and labor managers, politicians and intellectuals, in the manner of the first New Deal, or of the Labor government in Britain.

But we must return this question to the actualities from which up to now it has been abstracted. The process of backing into socialism in the contemporary world is not so simple as it sounds. Too many forces are working, some wittingly, some not, to obstruct that process. They can be discussed under three heads: the death-wish of the capitalists; the betrayal of the intellectuals; and the counter-revolution of the Soviet Union.

The Death-wish of the Capitalists

Marxist folklore, we have seen, has always overrated the bourgeoisie. The capitalists have certainly been great organizers of production and, in this process, great exploiters of the downtrodden. But their confidence, intelligence, and ruthlessness have always dwindled as they got farther away from the factory or counting-house. They have constituted a plutocracy, not an aristocracy. They have never been, in the political sense, an effective governing class.

A plutocracy is trained to think in terms of business dealings and not of war, in terms of security and not of honor, in terms of class and not of nation. With their power dependent on the continued convertibility of pieces of paper, they dread anything which might upset the fragile conventions of economic society. They lack the instinct, energy, and courage to govern. The shift which saved Britain in 1940 suggests some of the contrasts. Chamberlain reflected the

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sentiments of the business community—the longing for quiet, the hatred of violence, the terror of social upheaval. Churchill's instincts were those of an imperial aristocracy, bold, vigorous, somewhat contemptuous of trade, with power founded, not on finance, but on land, tradition, and sense of nationality. "There is something to be said for government by a great aristocracy which has furnished leaders to the nation in peace and war for generations," Theodore Roosevelt once observed; "even a democrat like myself must admit this. But there is absolutely nothing to be said for government by a plutocracy, for government by men very powerful in certain lines and gifted with the 'money touch,' but with ideals which in their essence are merely those of so many glorified pawnbrokers."

The bourgeoisie consequently has always had to turn for protection to some nonbourgeois group. Without such protection, as Schumpeter puts it, it is "unable not only to lead its nation but even to take care of its particular class interest. Which amounts to saying that it needs a master." In England the business classes have had the aristocracy, and now the Socialists, to protect them. In America when the chips were down the businessmen have always been bailed out by the radical democracy, often under aristocratic leadership—the Jeffersons, Jacksons, Lincolns, Wilsons, Roosevelts.

This normal political incompetence of the capitalists has recently been exaggerated by a gradual disappearance of the capitalist energies themselves: it is this combination which justifies the term death-wish. Not only does the bourgeoisie lack the skill to protect itself; it is increasingly lacking in the will to protect itself. The capitalist system, in effect, has killed its own interest in survival. The rise of big business, the development of mass production and mass organization, have slowly taken the guts out of the idea of property. The spread of rationalism has set in motion a skepticism which holds no social authority sacred. Capitalism at once has strengthened the economic centralization and loosened the moral bonds of society. The result is a profound instability which invites collectivism as a means of restoring social discipline. As Schumpeter puts it, capitalism "socializes the bourgeois mind." Eventually the roots of capitalist motivation will wither away.

Even in America, the capitalist fatherland, the death-wish of the business community appears to go beyond the normal limits of political incompetence and geographical security. After the First World War Trotsky predicted that American capitalism would now make its stunning debut on the world stage. Instead, American capi-

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talism crept back into bed and pulled the covers over its face. It responded to the challenge of Nazism by founding the America First Committee. It responded to the opportunities opened up by the Second World War by rushing to dismantle the instrumentalities of American military and economic influence in the name of balancing the budget.

The foreign policy of the business community is characteristically one of cowardice rationalized in terms of high morality. The great refusal to take on the Russians today is perfectly typical. That *doyen* of American capitalists, Joseph P. Kennedy, recently argued that the US should not seek to resist the spread of communism. Indeed, it should "permit communism to have its trial outside the Soviet Union if that shall be the fate or will of certain peoples. In most of these countries a few years will demonstrate the inability of communism to achieve its promises, while through this period the disillusioned experimenters will be observing the benefits of the American way of life, and most of them will seek to emulate it." On this ground Kennedy has opposed all foreign loans from the British loan on.

We are confronted today with the picture of New Dealers trying to launch a positive foreign policy over the vigorous protests of the business groups which that policy will protect. Fearing change, fearing swift action because it might portend change, lacking confidence and resolution, subject to spasms of panic and hysteria, the American business community is too irresponsible to work steadily for the national interest, or even for its narrow class interests. At least the English business community has been persuaded by experience that it should accede to the political leadership of the aristocracy or, more recently, of the Socialists—of any group which will govern. But the American business community continues to resist the radical democracy, like a drowning man threshing out at his rescuer.

In so doing, it may destroy the possibility of a peaceful transition to socialism. In its panic it may yield to the most ruthless blackmailer —externally to the Soviet Union, internally to any political gangster promising security—and thereby dissipate the nation's capacity to control its process of change. "Experience shows that the middle classes allow themselves to be plundered quite easily," Sorel wrote, "provided a little pressure is brought to bear, and that they are intimidated by the fear of revolution." This growing capitalist irresponsibility is the symptom of the death-wish: it is Samson in the temple.

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The Betrayal of the Intellectuals

Official liberalism was the product of the Enlightenment, cross-fertilized with such things as Unitarianism, science, bourgeois complacency, and a belief in progress. It dispensed with the absurd Christian myths of sin and damnation and believed that what shortcomings man might have were to be redeemed, not by Jesus on the cross, but by the benevolent unfolding of history. Tolerance, free inquiry, and technology, operating in the framework of human perfectibility, would in the end create a heaven on earth, a goal accounted much more sensible and wholesome than a heaven in heaven.

This rejection of the dark and subterranean forces in human nature acquired a kind of protective coloration in a century of peace and prosperity, like the nineteenth. Insight into evil became the property of a few disreputable aesthetes and a few obstinate Christians. But the rationalists were betrayed by their own god in the twentieth century when history went back on them and unleashed the terror. Freud, Kierkegaard, Sorel, Nietzsche had charted patterns of depravity while the sun of optimism was high in the sky. As it sank, practical men, like Hitler, Stalin, Mussolini, transformed depravity into a way of life.

Much more than a generation divides the liberals who denied evil from those who accept it. The word evil is here a designation, not an explanation; but, whether you use the vocabulary of religion or psychoanalysis or antirationalism, whether you invoke Augustine or Freud or Pareto, there are moody and destructive impulses in man of which official liberalism has taken no serious account. Louis Jaffe recently wrote of Justice Brandeis, "One felt that nothing in his system prepared Brandeis for Hitler." Brandeis was among the more realistic of his generation: how much more unprepared were the readers of the liberal weeklies, the great thinkers who sought to combat Nazism by peace strikes, the Oxford oath, and unilateral disarmament.

The type of the official liberal today is the fellow-traveler or the fellow-traveler of the fellow-traveler: see the columns of *The New Republic* and *The Nation*. For the most chivalrous reasons they cannot believe that ugly facts underlie fair words: however they look at it, for example, the USSR keeps coming through as a kind of enlarged Brook Farm community. Nothing in their system has prepared them for Stalin. The official liberal differs from the Communist, who knows what he is doing. He differs from the New Dealer, who has learned some of the facts of life from the exercise of responsibility

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and is consequently deeply hostile to the Communist. The official liberal runs interference for the Communist with a system of intellectual evasion and subterfuge that results directly from a desperate attempt to square a superficial and optimistic creed with a bitter century.

Many contemporary radicals have rejected these sunny meditations. Silone, Koestler, Malraux, Niebuhr, Orwell, Dos Passos, Hemingway, Macdonald: the very names suggest a range of perceptions and anxieties unknown to the columns of *The New Republic*. In this new version, man becomes at once greater and more pitiable, more aspiring and more frustrated, more hallowed and more doomed. This image stands up better in the century of Buchenwald. But the men who are possessed by it are still under official malediction as tired liberals, judases, and apostles of disillusion.

If you believe man to be essentially good, you commit yourself to the endless task of explaining why he does not always behave that way. A simple way out is to affirm that, in spite of appearances to the contrary, he really is performing the good. In the course of this solution the liberal intellectual generates myths which he comes to prefer to actualities, especially if the actualities are uncomfortable (as they usually are). The addiction to myth is of course increased by the fact that the liberal has denied himself such traditional outlets for credulity as religion.

The susceptibility to wishfulness, the need for the sustaining myth, the disbelief in man's urge to destroy—all combine to reduce the capacity for critical judgment which the intellectual's detachment from social loyalties should confer upon him. This is the real *trahison des clercs*. Instead of contributing clarity, logic, and rigorous insistence on facts, the liberal intellectual has been more and more devoting his ingenuity to laminating his favorite myths. He has failed wretchedly to live up to his obligation to provide intellectual leadership.

One myth, to which the liberal has clung in the face of experience with the imperturbable ardor of an early Christian, is the mystique of the proletariat. This myth, given its classical form by Marx, himself so characteristically a bourgeois intellectual, states that the action of the working class will overthrow capitalist tyranny and establish by temporary dictatorship a classless society. Its appeal lies partly in the intellectual's sense of guilt over living pleasantly by his wits instead of unpleasantly by his hands, partly in the intellectual's somewhat feminine fascination with the rude and muscular power of the proletariat, partly in the intellectual's desire to compensate for his

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own sense of alienation by immersing himself in the broad maternal expanse of the masses. Worship of the proletariat becomes a perfect fulfillment for the frustrations of the intellectual.

Of course, this is not the whole story. There was considerable prima facie support for the myth. The beginnings of trade union organization at one time may have promised a serious future for an organized proletariat. But there is no point in keeping up the pretense a century later. The trade union movement is as clearly indigenous to the capitalist system as the corporation itself, and it has no particular meaning apart from that system. In a socialist society its functions are radically transformed: it becomes, not a free labor movement, but a labor front. Even in England, as Sir Walter Citrine remarked on joining the Coal Board, strikes can no longer be trade union instruments in a nationalized industry. Unions inevitably become organs for disciplining the workers, not for representing them.

Indeed, the whole conception of the proletariat as an agency of change is meaningless. The technical necessity for organization instantly sets in motion a tendency toward oligarchy; separate interests arise between leadership and rank-and-file; and a working class committee after a short time will stand for, not the working class, but its own bureaucratic instinct for survival.

Moreover, workers as a mass have rarely had the impulses attributed to them by Marxism. They too often believe in patriotism or religion, or read comic strips, go to movies, play slot machines and patronize taxi dance halls: in one way or another, they try to cure their discontent by narcotics rather than by surgery. Thus they are rarely swept by the proper mass emotions. The general strike is in principle the most potent weapon in the world, but it always remains potent in principle. The great moment for the general strike was perhaps 1914; but, even had Jaurès survived, the working classes would have succumbed to the bugle, the flag, and the military parade. Marx recognized that many workers were not Marxists and so invented a classification called the *Lumpenproletariat* in which were dumped those who did not live up to theory. Lenin recognized this too and so invented a disciplined party which, announcing itself the only true representative of the proletariat, ruthlessly shot down dissenters. No country has more spectacularly abandoned a belief in the working class than the USSR.

For these various reasons, the mystique of the working class has faded somewhat since the First World War. In its place has arisen a new mystique, more radiant and palpable, and exercising

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the same fascinations of power and guilt: the mystique of the USSR. Each success of the Soviet Union has conferred new delights on those possessed of the need for prostration and frightened of the responsibilities of decision. In a world which makes very little sense, these emotions are natural enough. But surrender to them destroys the capacity for clear intellectual leadership which ought to be the liberal's function in the world. In an exact sense, Soviet Russia has become the opiate of the intellectuals.

The Counter-revolution of the Soviet Union

The capitalist death-wish and the liberal treachery are more or less unconscious obstacles to a tranquil passage to socialism. The role of the Soviet Union, on the other hand, is highly intelligent, purposeful, and determined. The USSR perceives clearly that the most deadly foe of Communism is not the reactionary, whose blind folly will only speed the disintegration of his own society. The serious enemy is really the radical democrat who proposes to solve the problems of unemployment and want without enslaving the masses and setting up a police state.

So long as Churchill lived in Downing Street, Moscow knew that Britain offered no competition in the struggle for Europe. But the victory of the Labor Party in the summer of 1945 brought new hope to all the people of Europe who still had freedom of political expression. It signalized an alternative to Moscow which promised the same economic advantages—and with political liberty in place of the NKVD. It was at this point that the USSR stepped up its attack on the Socialist parties and began its concerted policy of hammering at the weak points, strategic and ideological, of the already crumbling British Empire.

The Communist war against the Second International has been a brilliant success. The Social Democratic parties of Europe have remained steadfast in their traditions of caution, feebleness, and inactivity. They appear to be doomed today, because the working class does not trust their determination to carry out reforms, and the middle class does not trust their determination to resist Communism. When the Communists do succeed in finally absorbing or destroying the Socialists, they will have virtually attained their objective of destroying the center and reducing the alternatives to the red and the black. The crime of the USSR against the world is its determination to make experiments in libertarian socialism impossible.

What are the motives of the Soviet campaign against the West?

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"The trouble with Russia," Schumpeter has observed with considerable truth, "is not that she is socialist but that she is Russia." If the Romanovs had pushed through industrialization and ridden out its political consequences, Russia would be confronting the world with much the same immediate problems of expansion—with the same thrusts into western Europe, the Mediterranean, the Middle East and China. But Czarist Russia would not have been able to multiply its national strength with the tremendous political weapon of Communism.

The exception makes a good deal of difference. Imperial Russia could be dealt with like Imperial Germany; its objectives would have been inherently limited by the clash of one nationalism with another. But Nazism gave Germany a potent ideological weapon, and Communism is infinitely more exportable than Nazism. As a social faith, it can penetrate to every corner of the world and rally its fifth columns wherever injustice and poverty exist. Communism gives Russian expansionism its warhead. On a pre-arranged signal, the Russian drive can explode internally in every country on the globe.

Russian national objectives are limited; Communist international objectives are not. Experience has shown that a nation can sustain unlimited objectives for only a limited time. The fervor of a crusade wears a people out; after a time the country relapses from the messiah business into its national routine. The problem is to prevent the Soviet Union from breaking out of the reservation during its period of messianic intoxication.

The Role of the Armed Truce

British policy under Chamberlain presents a model of how *not* to undertake a campaign of containment. The US is faced with the same situation today, only the geographical margins of tolerance are greater with the USSR than they ever were with Germany. Reduced to its fundamentals, the American problem is to arrange the equilibrium of forces in the world so that, at every given moment of decision, the Soviet General Staff will decide against aggressions that might provoke a general war on the ground that they present too great a military risk. At the same time, the US must not succumb to demands for an anti-Soviet crusade nor permit reactionaries in the buffer states to precipitate conflicts in defense of their own obsolete prerogatives. Fascism has receded, but it has not disappeared.

The US must maintain a precarious balance between a complete readiness to repel Soviet aggression beyond a certain limit and com-

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plete determination to demonstrate within this limit no aggressive US intentions toward the USSR. It must commit itself, economically, politically, and militarily, to the maintenance of this balance over a long period. Given sufficient time, the Soviet internal tempo will slow down. The ruling class will become less risk-minded, more security-minded. Greater vested interests will develop in the existing order; Russia itself will begin to fear the revolutionary tendencies which modern war trails in its wake. The squabbles between the gallicans and the ultramontanes will dilute the ardor of national Communist parties; they too will develop stakes in an existing national order, if only in order to hold on to a mass following. At the same time, US backing to the parties of the non-Communist left and US support for vast programs of economic reconstruction may go far toward removing the conditions of want, hunger, and economic insecurity which are constant invitations to Soviet expansion.

Can the US conceive and initiate so subtle a policy? Though the secret has been kept pretty much from the readers of the liberal press, the State Department has been proceeding for some time somewhat along these lines. Both Byrnes and Marshall have perceived the essential need—to be firm without being rancorous, to check Soviet expansion without making unlimited commitments to an anti-Soviet crusade, to invoke power to counter power without engaging in senseless intimidation, to encourage the growth of the democratic left. The performance has often fallen below the conception; but the direction has been correct. Men like Ben Cohen, Dean Acheson, Charles Bohlen have tried to work out details and whip up support for this admittedly risky program.

It is risky. It may at any moment tumble over into the ideological crusade. In addition, its proponents must combat the death-wish of the capitalists, as exemplified by Mr. Kennedy, and the befuddlement of the fellow-travelers, as exemplified by Mr. Wallace, both of whom unite in opposing a policy of resistance to Soviet expansion. The triumph of either the Kennedy or the Wallace views, if there is much difference between them, would mean the triumph of the radical expansionists in the Politburo, for it would remove all present obstacles to the Soviet conquest of Europe.

But can the US embark on any program of resistance to Soviet expansion without itself moving toward fascism? There is certainly a short-run tendency in critical situations toward reliance on reactionaries as counter to Communists, because they are the only people who can match violence with violence. In a divided land like China

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or Greece the non-Communist left, men who believe in debate and civil liberty, cannot stand up for long against men, whether of the extreme right or of the extreme left, who believe in rifles.

But over the long-term the US cannot develop a dependence on the right, if only because the right is a bad practical investment. A program of containment requires a ring of stable and satisfied countries around Russia—countries whose internal well-being provides a first line of defense against Communist penetration. At this stage in the world's history, the right cannot provide such governments. The very logic of events may force even a right-wing government in this country to support left-wing governments abroad, just as the Truman government is entertaining the thought of giving Greece the New Deal it has driven out of Washington. Far from leading to fascism at home, a program of containment may after a certain period lead to greater power for American labor. Just as it was necessary to bribe the business community to take part in the struggle against fascism, so it may be necessary to bribe the labor movement to take part in a struggle against Communism. Whatever else may be said about a "permanent war economy," at least wages are high, employment is full, and the economy is relatively stable and productive.

All this presupposes, of course, that Marshall has not only the ability to develop his policy but also the backing to carry it out. The backing, rather than the policy itself, presents the serious question. A democracy is politically unreliable at best; the American democracy is notoriously unreliable on all questions of maintaining a continuous foreign policy. Between the irresponsibility of the capitalists, the confusion of the intellectuals, and the impotence of the working class, there may arise a state of irresolution which produces a political vacuum; and a political vacuum inevitably attracts activists—gangsters, terrorists and totalitarians.

At this point the responsibility of the intellectual becomes manifest. Some one must serve as the custodian of honesty and clarity in a turbulent and stricken society. Some one must restore a serious sense of the value of facts, of the integrity of reason, of devotion to truth. Some one must provide intellectual leadership. As capitalism crumbles through the world, we know that any path which can preserve peace and freedom is narrow and hazardous. Our instruments must be as precise as possible, our analysis as dispassionate, our conclusions as honest and objective as we can make them. One false step may plunge the world into atomic war or deliver it into totalitarian darkness.

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The intellectual must not be deflected from his responsibility by inherited dogma. It is clear today that Marx's method was often better than his own application of it. Experience is a better master than any sacred text. The experience of a century has shown that neither the capitalists nor the workers are so tough and purposeful as Marx anticipated; that their mutual bewilderment and inertia leave the way open for some other group to serve as the instrument of change; that when the politician-manager-intellectual type—the New Dealer—is intelligent and decisive, he can get society to move just fast enough for it to escape breaking up under the weight of its own contradictions; but that, when no one provides intellectual leadership within the frame of gradualism, then the professional revolutionist will fill the vacuum and establish a harder and more ruthless regime than the decadent one he displaces; and that the Communist revolutionist is winning out over the fascist and is today in alliance with an expanding world power which will bring every kind of external pressure to block the movement toward democratic socialism.

These seem to me the actualities of the day. If their acceptance means discarding Marx, let us by all means discard Marx. Too much left-wing political "thinking" is a form of scholasticism. We must make our own prognosis. If you say that the intellectual is a frail reed upon which to lean, you are probably guilty of understatement. But at least serious thinking is his job. Let him work at it for a time. He is more likely to escape from his confusion than the capitalist from his irresponsibility or the worker from his impotence. Serious intellectual direction may give our politics a cogency and a firmness which will maintain the equilibrium of forces and avert the war with Russia. If we can avoid this war, if we can contain the counter-revolution of the USSR within clearly marked limits, we have a good chance to test the possibilities of a peaceful transition into a not undemocratic socialism. But, if our leadership and determination falter, neither democracy, socialism, nor anything else will have any more of a future than Hiroshima or Nagasaki.

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Three Academic Pieces*

WALLACE STEVENS

THE REALM OF RESEMBLANCE

THE ACCURACY of accurate letters is an accuracy with respect to the structure of reality.

Thus, if we desire to formulate an accurate theory of poetry, we find it necessary to examine the structure of reality, because reality is the central reference for poetry. By way of accomplishing this, suppose we examine one of the significant components of the structure of reality, that is to say, the resemblance between things.

First, then, as to the resemblance between things in nature, it should be observed that resemblance constitutes a relation between them since, in some sense, all things resemble each other. Take, for example, a beach extending as far as the eye can reach bordered, on the one hand, by trees and, on the other, by the sea. The sky is cloudless and the sun is red. In what sense do the objects in this scene resemble each other? There is enough green in the sea to relate it to the palms. There is enough of the sky reflected in the water to create a resemblance, in some sense, between them. The sand is yellow between the green and the blue. In short, the light alone creates a unity not only in the recedings of distance, where differences become invisible, but also in the contacts of closer sight. So, too, sufficiently generalized, each man resembles all other men, each woman resembles all other women, this year resembles last year. The beginning of time will, no doubt, resemble the end of time. One world is said to resemble another.

A moment ago the resemblance between things was spoken of as one of the significant components of the structure of reality. It is significant because it creates the relation just described. It binds together. It is the base of appearance. In nature, however, the relation is between two or more of the parts of reality. In metaphor (and this word is used as a symbol for the single aspect of poetry with which we are now concerned, that is to say: the creation of resemblance by the imagination, even though metamorphosis might be a better word)—in metaphor, the resemblance may be, first,

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between two or more parts of reality; second, between something real and something imagined or, what is the same thing, between something imagined and something real as, for example, between music and whatever may be evoked by it; and, third, between two imagined things, as when we say that God is good, since the statement involves a resemblance between two concepts, a concept of God and a concept of goodness.

We are not dealing with identity. Both in nature and in metaphor identity is the vanishing point of resemblance. After all, if a man's exact double entered a room, seated himself and spoke the words that were in the man's mind, it would remain a resemblance. James Wardrop, in *Signature*, said recently, "The business of the press is to furnish an indefinite public with a potentially indefinite number of identical texts." Nature is not mechanical to that extent for all its mornings and evenings, for all its inhabitants of China or India or Russia, for all its waves, or its leaves, or its hands. Its prodigy is not identity but resemblance and its universe of reproduction is not an assembly line but an incessant creation. Because this is so in nature, it is so in metaphor.

Nor are we dealing with imitation. The difference between imitation and resemblance is a nicety. An imitation may be described as an identity manqué. It is artificial. It is not fortuitous as a true metaphor is. If it is an imitation of something in nature, it may even surpass identity and assume a praeter-nature. It may very well escape the derogatory. If it is an imitation of something in metaphor, it is lifeless and that, finally, is what is wrong with it. Resemblance in metaphor is an activity of the imagination; and in metaphor the imagination is life. In Chinese metaphor, there is a group of subjects to which poets used to address themselves, just as early Western painters and etchers used to address themselves to such a subject as the Virgin crowned by Angels. The variations in these themes were not imitations, nor identities, but resemblances.

In reality, there is a level of resemblance, which is the level of nature. In metaphor, there is no such level. If there were it would be the level of resemblance of the imagination, which has no such level. If, to our surprise, we should meet a monsieur who told us that he was from another world, and if he had in fact all the indicia of divinity, the luminous body, the nimbus, the heraldic stigmata, we should recognize him as above the level of nature but not as above the level of the imagination. So, too, if, to our surprise, we should meet one of these morons whose remarks are so conspicuous a part

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of the folklore of the world of the radio—remarks made without using either the tongue or the brain, spouted much like the spoutings of small whales, we should recognize him as below the level of nature but not as below the level of the imagination. It is not, however, a question of above or below but simply of beyond. Level is an abbreviated form of level of resemblance. The statement that the imagination has no level of resemblance is not to be taken as a statement that the imagination itself has no limits. The imagination is deceptive in this respect. There is a limit to its power to surpass resemblance and that limit is to be found in nature. The imagination is able to manipulate nature as by creating three legs and five arms but it is not able to create a totally new nature as, for instance, a new element with creatures indigenous thereto, their costumes and cuisines. Any discussion of level is a discussion of balance as well. Thus, a false exaggeration is a disturbing of the balance between reality and the imagination.

Resemblances between one object and another as between one brick and another, one egg and another, are elementary. There are many objects which in respect to what they suggest resemble other objects, people. Thus, in addition to the fact that one man resembles all other men, something about one man may make him resemble some other particular man and this is true even when the something about him is detached from him, as his wig. The wig of a particular man reminds us of some other particular man and resembles him. A strand of a child's hair brings back the whole child and in that way resembles the child. There must be vast numbers of things within this category. Apparently objects of sentiment most easily prove the existence of this kind of resemblance: something in a locket, one's grandfather's high beaver hat, one's grandmother's hand-woven blankets. One may find intimations of immortality in an object on the mantlepiece; and these intimations are as real in the mind in which they occur as the mantlepiece itself. Even if they are only a part of an adult make-believe, the whole point is that the structure of reality because of the range of resemblances that it contains is measurably an adult make-believe. Perhaps the whole field of connotation is based on resemblance. Perhaps resemblance which seems to be related so closely to the imagination is related even more closely to the intelligence, of which perceptions of resemblance are effortless accelerations.

What has just been said shows that there are private resemblances. The resemblance of the baby's shoes to the baby, by suggestion, is likely to be a resemblance that exists for one or two alone.

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A public resemblance, by contrast, like the resemblance of the profile of a mountain to the profile of General Washington, exists for that great class of people who co-exist with the great ferns in public gardens, amplified music and minor education. What our eyes behold may well be the text of life but one's meditations on the text and the disclosures of these meditations are no less a part of the structure of reality.

It quite seems as if there is an activity that makes one thing resemble another (possibly as a phase of the police power of conformity). What the eye beholds may be the text of life. It is, nevertheless, a text that we do not write. The eye does not beget in resemblance. It sees. But the mind begets in resemblance as the painter begets in representation, that is to say, as the painter makes his world within a world; or as the musician begets in music, in the obvious small pieces having to do with gardens in the rain or the fountains of Rome and in the obvious larger pieces having to do with the sea, Brazilian night or those woods in the neighborhood of Vienna in which the hunter was accustomed to blow his horn and in which, also, yesterday, the birds sang preludes to the atom bomb. It is not difficult, having once predicated such an activity, to attribute it to a desire for resemblance. What a ghastly situation it would be if the world of the dead was actually different from the world of the living and, if as life ends, instead of passing to a former Victorian sphere, we passed into a land in which none of our problems had been solved, after all, and nothing resembled anything we had ever known and nothing resembled anything else in shape, in color, in sound, in look or otherwise. To say farewell to our generation and to look forward to a continuation in a Jerusalem of pure surrealism would account for the taste for oblivion.

The study of the activity of resemblance is an approach to the understanding of poetry. Poetry is a satisfying of the desire for resemblance. As the mere satisfying of a desire, it is pleasurable. But poetry if it did nothing but satisfy a desire would not rise above the level of many lesser things. Its singularity is that in the act of satisfying the desire for resemblance it touches the sense of reality, it enhances the sense of reality, heightens it, intensifies it. If resemblance is described as a partial similarity between two dissimilar things, it complements and reinforces that which the two dissimilar things have in common. It makes it brilliant. When the similarity is between things of adequate dignity, the resemblance may be said to transfigure or to sublimate them. Take, for example, the resemblance

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between reality and any projection of it in belief or in metaphor. What is it that these two have in common? Is not the glory of the idea of any future state a relation between a present and a future glory? The brilliance of earth is the brilliance of every paradise. However, not all poetry attempts such grandiose transfiguration. Everyone can call to mind a variety of figures and see clearly how these resemblances please and why; how inevitably they heighten our sense of reality. The images in Ecclesiastes: "Or ever the silver cord be loosed, or the golden bowl be broken, or the pitcher be broken at the fountain, or the wheel broken at the cistern"—these images are not the language of reality, they are the symbolic language of metamorphosis, or resemblance, of poetry, but they relate to reality and they intensify our sense of it and they give us the pleasure of "lentor and solemnity" in respect to the most commonplace objects. These images have a special interest, as a group of images in harmony with each other would constitute a poem within, or above, a poem. The suggestion sounds euphuistic. If the desire for resemblance is the desire to enjoy reality, it may be no less true that the desire to enjoy reality, an acute enough desire today, is the desire for elegance. Euphuism had its origin in the desire for elegance and it was euphuism that was a season in the sun for metaphor. A school of literary ascetics denying itself any indulgence in resemblances would, necessarily, fall back on reality and vent all its relish there. The metaphorical school, in the end, does the same thing.

The proliferation of resemblances extends an object. The point at which this process begins or rather, at which this growth begins, is the point at which ambiguity has been reached. The ambiguity that is so favorable to the poetic mind is precisely the ambiguity favorable to resemblance. In this ambiguity, the intensification of reality by resemblance increases realization and this increased realization is pleasurable. It is as if a man who lived indoors should go outdoors on a day of sympathetic weather. His realization of the weather would exceed that of a man who lives outdoors. It might, in fact, be intense enough to convert the real world about him into an imagined world. In short a sense of reality keen enough to be in excess of the normal sense of reality creates a reality of its own. Here, what matters is that the intensification of the sense of reality creates a resemblance: that reality of its own is a reality. This may be going round a circle, first clockwise, then anticlockwise. If the savor of life is the savor of reality, the fact will establish itself whichever way one approaches it.

The relations between the ego and reality must be left largely on

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the margin. Yet Narcissus did not expect, when he looked in the stream, to find in his hair a serpent coiled to strike, nor, when he looked in his own eyes there, to be met by a look of hate, nor, in general, to discover himself at the center of an inexplicable ugliness from which he would be bound to avert himself. On the contrary, he sought out his image everywhere because it was the principle of his nature to do so and, to go a step beyond that, because it was the principle of his nature, as it is of ours, to expect to find pleasure in what he found. Narcissism, then, involves something beyond the prime sense of the word. It involves, also, this principle, that as we seek out our resemblances we expect to find pleasure in doing so, that is to say, in what we find. So strong is that expectation that we find nothing else. What is true of the observations of ourselves is equally true of the observations of resemblances between other things having no relation to us. We say that the sea, when it expands in a calm and immense reflection of the sky, resembles the sky, and this statement gives us pleasure. We enjoy the resemblance for the same reason that, if it was possible to look into the sea as into a glass and if we should do so and suddenly should behold there some extraordinary transfiguration of ourselves, the experience would strike us as one of those amiable revelations that nature occasionally vouchsafes to favorites. So, when we think of arpeggi we think of opening wings and the effect of the resemblance is pleasurable. When we read Ecclesiastes the effect of the symbols is pleasurable because as symbols they are resemblances and as resemblances they are pleasurable and they are pleasurable because it is a principle of our nature that they should be, the principle being not something derived from Narcissism since Narcissism itself is merely an evidence of the operation of the principle that we expect to find pleasure in resemblances.

We have been trying to get at a truth about poetry, to get at one of the principles that compose the theory of poetry. It comes to this, that poetry is a part of the structure of reality. If this has been demonstrated, it pretty much amounts to saying that the structure of poetry and the structure of reality are one or, in effect, that poetry and reality are one, or should be. This may be less thesis than hypothesis. Yet hypotheses relating to poetry, although they may appear to be very distant illuminations, could be the fires of fate, if rhetoric ever meant anything.

There is a gradus ad metaphoram. The nature of a metaphor is, like the nature of a play, comic, tragic, tragi-comic and so on. It may be poetic. A poetic metaphor, that is to say, a metaphor poetic

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in a sense more specific than the sense in which poetry and metaphor are one, appears to be poetry at its source. It is. At least it is poetry at one of its sources although not necessarily the most fecundating. But the steps to this particular abstraction, the gradus ad metaphoram in respect to the general sense in which poetry and metaphor are one, is, like the ascent to any of the abstractions that interest us importantly, an ascent through illusion which gathers round us more closely and thickly, as we might expect it to do, the more we penetrate it.

In the fewest possible words since, as between resemblances one is always a little more nearly perfect than another and since, from this, it is easy for perfectionism of a sort to evolve, it is not too extravagant to think of resemblances and of the repetitions of resemblances as a source of the ideal. In short, metaphor has its aspect of the ideal. This aspect of it cannot be dismissed merely because we think that we have long since outlived the ideal. The truth is that we are constantly outliving it and yet that the ideal itself remains alive with an enormous life.

SOMEONE PUTS A PINEAPPLE TOGETHER

I

O juventes, O filii, he contemplates
A wholly artificial nature, in which
The profusion of metaphor has been increased.

It is something on a table that he sees,
The root of a form, as of this fruit, a fund,
The angel at the center of this rind,

This husk of Cuba, tufted emerald,
Himself, may be, the irreducible x
At the bottom of imagined artifice,

Its inhabitant and elect expositor.
It is as if there were three planets: the sun,
The moon and the imagination, or, say,

Day, night and man and his endless effigies.
If he sees an object on a table, much like
A jar of the shoots of an infant country, green

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And bright, or like a venerable urn,
Which, from the ash within it, fortifies
A green that is the ash of what green is,

He sees it in this tangent of himself.
And in this tangent it becomes a thing
Of weight, on which the weightless rests: from which

The ephemeras of the tangent swarm, the chance
Concourse of planetary originals,
Yet, as it seems, of human residence.

II

He must say nothing of the fruit that is
Not true, nor think it, less. He must defy
The metaphor that murders metaphor.

He seeks as image a second of the self,
Made subtle by truth's most jealous subtlety,
Like the true light of the truest sun, the true

Power in the waving of the wand of the moon,
Whose shining is the intelligence of our sleep.
He seeks an image certain as meaning is

To sound, sound's substance and executant,
The particular tingle in a proclamation
That makes it say the little thing it says,

Below the prerogative jumble. The fruit so seen
As a part of the nature that he contemplates
Is fertile with more than changes of the light

On the table or in the colors of the room.
Its propagations are more erudite,
Like precious scholia jotted down in the dark.

Did not the age that bore him bear him among
Its infiltrations? There had been an age
When a pineapple on the table was enough,

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Without the forfeit scholar coming in,
Without his enlargings and pale arrondissements,
Without the furious roar in his capital.

Green had, those days, its own implacable sting.
But now a habit of the truth had formed
To protect him in a privacy, in which

The scholar, captious, told him what he could
Of there, where the truth was not the respect of one,
But always of many, things. He had not to be told

Of the incredible subjects of poetry.
He was willing they should remain incredible,
Because the incredible, also, has its truth,

Its tuft of emerald that is real, for all
Its invitation to false metaphor.
The incredible gave him a purpose to believe.

III

How thick this gobbet is with overlays,
The double fruit of boisterous epicures,
Like the same orange repeating on one tree

A single self. Divest reality
Of its propriety. Admit the shaft
Of that third planet to the table and then:

1. The hut stands by itself beneath the palms.
2. Out of their bottle the green genii come.
3. A vine has climbed the other side of the wall.

4. The sea is spouting upward out of rocks.
5. Symbol of feasts and of oblivion.
6. White sky, pink sun, trees on a distant peak.

7. These lozenges are nailed-up lattices.
8. The owl sits humped. It has a hundred eyes.
9. The cocoanut and cockerel in one.

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10. This is how yesterday's volcano looks.
11. There is an island Palahude by name—
12. An uncivil shape like a gigantic haw.

These casual exfoliations are
Of the tropic of resemblance, sprigs
Of Capricorn or as the sign demands,

Apposites, to the slightest edge, of the whole
Undescribed composition of the sugar-cone,
Shiftings of an inchoate crystal tableau,

The momentary footings of a climb
Up the pineapple, a table Alp and yet
An Alp, a purple Southern mountain bisqued

With the molten mixings of related things,
Cat's taste possibly or possibly Danish lore,
The small luxuriations that portend

Universal delusions of universal grandeurs,
The slight incipiencies, of which the form,
At last, is the pineapple on the table or else

An object the sum of its complications, seen
And unseen. This is everybody's world.
Here the total artifice reveals itself

As the total reality. Therefore it is
One says even of the odor of this fruit,
That steeps the room, quickly, then not at all,

It is more than the odor of this core of earth
And water. It is that which is distilled
In the prolific ellipses that we know,

In the planes that tilt hard revelations on
The eye, a geometric glitter, tiltings
As of sections collecting toward the greenest cone.

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OF IDEAL TIME AND CHOICE

Since thirty mornings are required, to make
A day of which we say, this is the day
That we desired, a day of blank, blue wheels,

Involving the four corners of the sky,
Lapised and lacqued and freely emeraldine
In the space it fills, the silent motioner

There, of clear, revolving crystalline;
Since thirty summers are needed for a year
And thirty years, in the galaxies of birth,

Are time for counting and remembering,
And fill the earth with young men centuries old
And old men, who have chosen, and are cold

Because what they have chosen is their choice
No more and because they lack the will to tell
A matin gold from gold of Hesperus

The dot, the pale pole of resemblances
Experienced yet not well seen; of how
Much choosing is the final choice made up,

And who shall speak it, what child or wanderer
Or woman weeping in a room or man,
The last man given for epitome,

Upon whose lips the dissertation sounds,
And in what place, what exultant terminal,
And at what time both of the year and day;

And what heroic nature of what text
Shall be the celebration in the words
Of that oration, the happiest sense in which

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A world agrees, thought's compromise, resolved
At last, the center of resemblance, found
Under the bones of time's philosophers?

The orator will say that we ourselves
Stand at the center of ideal time
The inhuman making choice of a human self.

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The Child Is the Meaning of This Life

DELMORE SCHWARTZ

Samuel Hart was the youngest child in a family of four children.

His father, who had been a strong ambitious man, died of overwork, that is to say, of trying with too much passion and intensity to become rich. At the time of his death his younger daughter, Sarah, was already married and his older daughter, Rebecca, had already begun a career as a designer of dresses. Leonard, the young man of the family and the third of the children, was studying to be a doctor and supporting himself by helping to run a cigar store at night. Thus the death of the father left the family intact as a family, especially since the mother Ruth Hart was a powerful human being who lived through her devotion to her children.

Samuel was a spoiled child and his mother felt that he was willful. But she felt that this was his nature and no one could change a person's nature. Being much younger than any of the other children, Samuel was also spoiled by his two sisters and his big brother Leonard. Thus one might say that if the fact of being the youngest child was the most important trait of his being, the fact that he had two older sisters and an older brother was also very important in him.

Samuel did not like to go to school and he did not like to work. He liked to hang out with the boys on the block and he was infatuated with games and with gambling. At school, the only subject in which he did well was mathematics, perhaps because his interest in gambling had made calculation interesting and important to him.

He wanted to quit high school because he did not succeed as a student, and though his brother Leonard sought to persuade him not to stop before he had finished, after a time his mother felt it was foolish to force a boy to study when he disliked school so much.

"He will never be a student, anyway," she said, "it is not his nature."

She was consoled by the brilliance of Leonard, a brilliance which did not, in fact, exist, for Leonard succeeded in getting from one step to the next step on the long journey to becoming a doctor only

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by deadening drudgery and forced striving, since he was like his father, intense, passionate, ambitious, and without imagination.

Samuel admired his brother and took pride in the fact that he was going to be a doctor as he took pride in his family as a whole, whenever pride was possible. And Samuel also admired Leonard because his mother loved Leonard so much. It was accepted in the family as a natural fact that the mother should love Leonard most of all. Perhaps the girls felt some resentment of this preference, but their resentment never became strong while on the other hand there had been a sharp obvious rivalry among the girls for the affection of the father.

Leonard was loved very much not only by his mother but also by his oldest sister Rebecca, for Rebecca in many ways, and especially in the depths where the emotions begin, followed her mother. Consequently Samuel was the pet of his sister as well as of his mother. The indulgence granted him was endless. One reason he did not like to go to school was that it was very difficult for him to get up in the morning, the result of his dislike of going to sleep or of coming home from his evenings with the boys. His mother became angry when he stayed out late, but hated to wake him up in the morning, and she did not become angry when he would not get up because as a mother she felt that sleep was very important to a boy's health. Leonard's health was delicate and she wished that he too would sleep late instead of getting up in the early morning to study just as his father had arisen at five and waited impatiently for the time when his store would be open for business.

Sarah was somewhat critical of her mother's attitude to Samuel and she felt that a boy ought to have an education. But it was thought by the family that Sarah was too critical of everyone. When Sarah argued with her mother that she was spoiling Samuel by "waiting on him hand and foot," the mother merely became angry. She pointed out Leonard's habits as a justification of her belief that it was a question of a boy's innate nature, the character he had at the moment of birth.

"You are not a good mother," said Sarah, "it is not good to pamper a boy like that. What will become of him?"

"I want my children to be happy, that's enough," said Ruth Hart, angered by her daughter's criticism.

Sarah married Michael, a successful young man, when she was nineteen and departed from the bosom of the family, much to her brother Samuel's relief, for she was the only one who nagged him

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and tried to get him to behave himself. Soon after Sarah's marriage Samuel quit high school and took a job with a neighborhood storekeeper. But since this job required that he get up early in the morning, it was not long before the storekeeper decided that Samuel was, as he explained to one of the girls, "too unreliable." Samuel went from job to job and sooner or later his passion to be with the boys and to gamble made him lose the job. In fact, to the extreme shame of his family, Samuel gambled with the money he had collected for a newsdealer who delivered newspapers, and it was necessary for Rebecca to take money from her own salary and hush up the whole affair. Sarah remarked that Rebecca was permitting herself to be used when Samuel gambled with the funds of his employer a second time, and Rebecca defended herself by saying: "I suppose you want me to let him get sent to reform school. How would Mamma feel then?"

"He ought to be taught a lesson," said Sarah. But the only result of Sarah's criticism was a feeling of dislike on the part of Rebecca, her mother, and Samuel, who were united whenever the pride of the family was involved.

Two years after the death of the father occurred the most shocking event ever to affect the family circle: Leonard died suddenly, just after he had graduated from medical school. His mother was inconsolable and some thought that she might die too, so extraordinary was her grief. She had taken the death of her husband with the equanimity of a strong, courageous, and instinctive being, and she had resisted the efforts to persuade her to marry again. But the death of her son left her in a state of impenetrable silence and apathy.

"It's as if she had turned into a statue," Sarah reported to her husband six months after the death of Leonard. "She sits by herself in her room, looks at Leonard's picture, and sometimes tears roll down her face, but she never makes a sound."

By this time Sarah had had her first child and friends of the family suggested that Ruth's first grandchild might console her. Hence, Sarah made a habit of bringing the infant in his baby carriage to her mother's house. The little boy, who had been named after his grandfather, was rocked, fed, and diapered in front of his grandmother, who paid no attention to him, although his birth had pleased and excited her six months before Leonard's death. Sarah told her mother of the advice of friends of the family, for she was always one to suppose that explanation was the proper means of attaining any end.

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"Mamma, Jasper will be just like Leonard," said Sarah, "you wait and see."

The mother regarded her daughter and her grandchild with an absent-minded politeness. She was too kind a person to resist these efforts at consolation and she was too kind to say how ridiculous it was to expect a mere infant to take the place of a grown man who had become a doctor.

"I would like to be alone," she said politely, and she said nothing when Sarah insisted that it was not good for her to be alone.

Leonard's death disturbed Samuel a good deal. He was fifteen years old at the time and he had been impressed but disturbed when family visitors had said to him, "Now you are the man of the family." The funeral was the most serious event of Samuel's life, and he behaved in a subdued and official way, but this did not prevent him from getting the evening paper when the family returned from the cemetery and studying the final scores in the major league pennant races. Actually Leonard's death made Samuel very much afraid, but he concealed his fear that he might die in early youth like his brother. He concealed his fear most of all from himself by means of his devotion to professional sports, major league baseball especially, which were not only the basis of much of his gambling with the other boys, but also as interesting to him as the ancient epics must have been to the classical world.

After Leonard's death, when his mother slowly took hold of herself and rose from her stony mourning, Samuel had his own way in all things. His mother spoiled him as never before, she was undisturbed when he lost or quit his jobs, and she never disturbed him when he slept late in the morning She was particularly concerned about his meals, this was the one part of life about which she enforced her own feelings, she insisted that Samuel eat well and she watched him eat with an intensity which was needless, since Samuel usually ate very well. He preferred sharp dishes, pickles, and delicatessen, and sweet dishes. It was for Samuel and not for Rebecca that his mother went down to the store in the cold early mornings of winter to get fresh rolls and coffee cake.

"This is rotten," Samuel said often of what his mother gave him, for he had come to expect to be pleased at every meal.

Meanwhile Rebecca, the good daughter and the one who supported her mother and her brother, went to business with two sandwiches and an apple in a brown paper bag, thus saving money. She

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gave most of her salary to her mother each week, and her mother put as much as possible in the bank, so that Rebecca would have a handsome dowry to give her husband.

When Samuel again and again gambled and lost the money he had collected, mother and daughter did not need to confer. Money was withdrawn from Rebecca's hard-earned savings, and without hesitation the money was returned to the rightful possessor.

"You support your brother as a gambler," said Sarah. "He is not even a good gambler. He always thinks he is going to win."

"It is my money," Rebecca replied. "I don't want to see Mamma miserable."

"Mamma is your weakness," said Sarah.

"Who is *your* weakness?" Rebecca replied. And it was true that Sarah was hard on everyone, especially hard on her husband, a difficult man in many ways.

But after this exchange, Sarah, insulted, sought out a motive for Rebecca's generosity. She decided that it was fear that when the proper husband came along for Rebecca, he would be repelled and perhaps driven off by the knowledge that the brother of the family was a scoundrel and a crook.

"That's true," said Rebecca when Sarah accused her of being thus motivated, "but that's not the only reason."

Rebecca then went to Samuel and told him what Sarah had said. "You see, not only do you make your mother miserable, but you make me look like a fool. Who ever heard of a sister who had to pay her brother's gambling debts to be sure that she would get a husband?"

"Why do you do it, if you don't want to?" asked Samuel, bemused in the abstract by his sister's behavior. And when Rebecca was enraged by this query, Samuel said that she was a crank and left the house.

Having arrived at early manhood, it was now possible for Samuel to get jobs in the garment district where his sister was employed and where she was liked by everyone. But these jobs also involved getting up early in the morning and when he was late to work day after day, he was fired, though not without a polite apology by the boss to Rebecca. Each time that he was fired, Samuel lost his temper and told the boss what he thought of him, what a cheap skate he was; and he was sure that he was in the right. Only when his sister had to pay his debts did he become contrite for a time.

Sarah's marriage showed no sign of improvement, on the con-

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trary everything became worse, as Michael became more successful. Michael allowed only one thing to interfere with his infidelities. He would come home in the evening to watch his infant son be fed and then departed again on some transparent pretext. Sarah's feeling of humiliation reached a new intensity when the husband of a girlhood friend saw Michael going into a downtown hotel when he was supposed to be in Pittsburgh on business. Hearing of this, Sarah went to her mother and said that she wanted to leave her husband and return to the household. Ruth Hart insisted that she stay with her husband. Rebecca entered the argument on her mother's side.

"Lots of women get used to that kind of behavior," said Rebecca. "No one thinks any less of you because Michael behaves like that."

It was more difficult for Sarah to take criticism from Rebecca than from anyone else. She turned to Rebecca and said:

"You'll see how you feel when your husband goes off for a week end with some cheap woman."

Samuel also admired Michael because he was a successful businessman.

Until he was twenty, Samuel showed no real interest in girls, and he did not seek them out, although when he was with the other boys he enjoyed the discussion of making love and made believe that he too had women on the string. When he was twenty, he was seduced by the stenographer in the office in which he worked. She was a girl of thirty who had been beguiled by her perception that Samuel was indeed innocent. Samuel had found the experience a strange one. It was not the exciting or overwhelming experience it was supposed to be, and he wondered that the boys made such a fuss about it. However, he took pride in the fact that the girl had gone after him, and he bragged to the boys of the gang about the occasion.

"I did not have to do a thing," he said, "it was handed to me on a silver platter."

"That's the way some girls are," said one of Samuel's friends, "they want to be like men, they want to start everything."

"Don't forget," said another interested young man, "some of them like them young. Samuel looks just like a big baby."

In his own mind Samuel compared the excitement of gambling, of playing poker or betting on a ball game, with the mild experience of love he had just known. When he bet on the outcome of a contest, he became very nervous, he waited impatiently for the results, he smoked cigars and was unable to sit down, and when he won he was

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penetrated by an extraordinary calm and joy, an emotion succeeded soon after by easy and imprudent spending. He did not win very often, but when he did, he bought himself what he considered the best shirts, neckties, and hats. The pleasure of entering a store and buying whatever he liked seemed like a kind of drunkenness.

Rebecca suggested in vain that when he won he ought to make some attempt to give her back the money he had taken from her. And then, seeing that he was not going to pay her back, she tried to persuade him to keep some of the money so that he would not be broke all the time.

"There must be something wrong with me," Samuel said to her on the occasions when it was necessary for him to be penitent. "I don't know what it is that makes me throw away money like that. I get the feeling that I am always going to win and that my luck has changed once and for all."

This feeling that he might some day break through and make a lot of money made Samuel declare that one day his sister would be repaid.

"You're going to get it all back," said Samuel, "every last nickel and with interest."

His mother continued to regard Samuel's behavior as unpleasant but inevitable. After all, there were many misfortunes which were far worse, and she thought that some day Samuel would change. It was foolish to expect too much from a young man, and there was little that could be done to alter a person's character or the nature of things. She became angry again with Sarah when Sarah, intervening as before, criticized Samuel; and when he told her to keep her big nose out of his affairs, Sarah, who would say anything when enraged, shouted.

"You were the one who should have died instead of your brother. Your brother was trying to make something of himself."

"Don't say that," said the mother sternly, for she felt that it was unfair, since it was not Samuel's fault that Leonard had died in early youth.

As the years passed and Rebecca did not find a husband, her mother became more and more troubled. And the unmarried state of her daughter disturbed her much more than Samuel's shiftlessness and gambling. At first it seemed that Rebecca was too particular, and there were friends of the family who felt that the success of Sarah's husband was the reason that Rebecca had so high a criterion

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of a suitable husband. There was no question but that an acute rivalry existed between the sisters, although curiously enough it was Sarah who suffered from it more than Rebecca. Yet perhaps it was not curious, for Rebecca had been her father's pet as a child and now it was clear that her mother preferred her to Sarah.

During the first World War, during prosperity, Rebecca's salary increased and by the end of the war she was made a designer by her employer, partly because he liked her very much, and partly because she was dependable, although uninspired. She had no genuine gift for design, but she was very good at following the fashions and imitating the inventions of other designers. As a designer, her salary was so high that the question of whom she would marry became more difficult, for she felt that she did not want to surrender her pay check of one hundred and fifty dollars a week merely for the sake of some struggling salesman who made perhaps a third of that amount. But her mother was impatient. Rebecca was already thirty and her mother became embarrassed when she heard of the marriages of other and younger girls. As a mother, Ruth Hart felt in the depths of her being, where the family life dictated her emotions, that it was utterly wrong that Rebecca should be unmarried.

"Don't worry, Mamma," said Rebecca, "the right man will come along one of these days."

Ruth Hart, however, did not depend upon this belief, and she studiously saved as much money as possible from Rebecca's salary so that the right man would be tempted by the money Rebecca had to give him. Rebecca obeyed her mother in all things, but she pointed out to her that many girls married without giving any money to their husbands.

"This is America, Mamma," said Rebecca. "You left Europe twenty-five years ago, but you think about everything as if you were still a girl in Europe."

"Money is money," said her mother, "it is just as important in America as Europe."

Rebecca was fairly content and she joked about being an old maid. But her mother's will prevailed. It was decided that if an investment were made in a better apartment and in better furniture, if mother, daughter, and son moved to a better neighborhood, Rebecca's chances would improve. When these shifts had been accomplished, it was decided that Samuel's name was vulgar and that it might be a good idea to call him Seymour. This was Rebecca's idea, and Samuel was indifferent.

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"You can call me whatever you want," he announced, "but it will take some time before Mamma calls me anything but Sammy."

The shift from Samuel to Seymour took years to complete, but Seymour went forth to a new job with his new name and for a time it seemed that the new name might mark the beginning of a new life for him. He was given a job by a real estate dealer who admired his mother and his sister, and he went to work promptly each morning to collect the rents and the installments on real estate purchases which constituted this business. He played poker on Saturday nights, but his luck was good for a time. But this reform lasted only until the end of winter and the beginning of the baseball season. Three months of good behavior made Seymour think that his luck had changed. He went to the opening game of the National League pennant race and bet the money he had collected that morning on the team he wanted to win. Thus he lost more than he had ever lost before, and once again the money had to be made good from Rebecca's bank account.

"How did I know I was going to lose?" he said to Rebecca when she told him that he must stop being dishonest. Seymour believed that since he was sure he was going to win, he had not been dishonest in betting his employer's money.

"You will always lose," said Rebecca, "can't you understand that? You're not the type of person who makes a good gambler."

This seemed an irrational argument to Seymour. After all, he might have won the bet.

"I can't lose all the time," he said with some meekness, knowing that as soon as Rebecca was involved in an argument about the nature of gambling her first anger was over and she would resign herself to paying the boss back.

"This is the last time," said Rebecca, "the very last time. I am not going to do this again. You can just go to jail."

Seymour knew very well that his mother would never let him go to jail, not as long as there was a cent in the bank. She became angry with him too and shouted at him and told him that he was good for nothing, but when he stalked from the house and did not return for dinner, she became so upset that she sent Rebecca to try to find him. The bet and the loss were concealed from Seymour's employer, but Seymour fell back on his old habits of sleeping late and staying up late. The employer began to call up each morning to ask Rebecca when Seymour was coming to work, and he told her that this was unheard-of behavior.

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"You know that it is only my respect for your mother and you that makes me stand for this kind of thing. Who ever heard of a boss ringing up to find out if one of the men in his employ was coming to work?"

Rebecca pacified the boss and Samuel's mother shouted at Samuel in the morning when he did not get up, but he merely turned to the wall and tried to sleep some more when she shook him and yelled at him. He knew that however she shouted at him, she would return to the devotion and attention to him which was so much a part of conscious being. She would let the water in the tub for his bath, she would hand him his socks and his underwear, she would press him to eat more at breakfast, even though he had slept too long.

During this time of great prosperity five years after the first World War, it was easy to get jobs and Seymour did not remain unemployed for any length of time. But he became ashamed of not being one of those who prospered, and when friends of the family visited the house, Seymour shut his bedroom door or moved about the house as if he were not a part of the family. He had a native shyness and a native bluster, but the bluster showed itself only in the intimacy of the family circle or among the boys at the drugstore.

His mother told Seymour that he ought not to be like that, he ought to come out and greet friends of the family.

"You are shy," she said, "I know what it is. I was shy until I was fifty years old and then I decided that it was foolish to be shy."

Yet Seymour suffered from an overwhelming curiosity about everyone who came to the house and everyone the family had ever known. No sooner had the visitors departed than Seymour came forth from his self-chosen exile and questioned his mother and sister like an inquisitor about what had been said and what events had occurred in other families.

"What are you, the district attorney?" Rebecca said to him, worn out by his tireless questions, which were often resumed the day after, for Seymour turned over in his mind what he had been told, and found it incomplete, inconclusive, or contradictory. He suspected lying and dishonesty in everyone, and most of all he suspected the distortion or the bluff.

"How can I tell you when they don't tell me," said Rebecca, impatient that Seymour should require an account so exhaustive.

"What's the matter with you," said Seymour, "can't you answer a civil question?"

And often Rebecca and his mother found that only by answer-

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ing all of Seymour's questions was it possible to bring his curiosity to an end.

It was natural that Seymour should be very much interested in the careers of other young men. When he heard of the misdeeds of some of them he manifested a scorn and a contempt which arose from the intensity with which he really believed in a middle-class morality. When Sarah, or less frequently Rebecca, remarked that he had no right to judge other young men, since he was virtually a black sheep himself, Seymour felt that they were unreasonable and personal.

"Don't do as I do," said Seymour, *"do as I say."* This was a quotation from some minister who had been reproached for misconduct. Seymour had long since forgotten what the nature of the misconduct was, but the sentiment seemed to him a complete justification for his judgments. Moreover, he took no little pride in the righteousness of these judgments and he felt that they showed that his heart was really in the right place, however often his own behavior was worthless.

"Naturally," he said, when his sisters told him that he ought to obey his own precepts, "naturally, it would be better if I practiced what I preach. But what do you want me to do, preach what I practice; would you like that better?"

Seymour felt triumphant, but Rebecca shook her head. She was unable to answer him, but she felt that he was wrong.

"You're just using words," she said, "you have no right to condemn other human beings the way you do."

By the time Sarah had two big children, Nancy and Jasper, her marriage was hopeless. Her mother suggested that she take a large apartment and that Sarah come to live with her and Rebecca and Seymour. Sarah accepted this proposal because Michael, who wanted a divorce, gave her only enough money to support the children, declaring that he would give her a monthly sum proportionate to his prosperity only when she gave him his divorce. But Sarah was determined not to give him a divorce, and her mother supported her in this determination. Mother and daughter believed that after a time Michael would return to his wife and children.

The new life in which Rebecca, Seymour, and the mother lived with Sarah and her children was a peculiar one. Rebecca was devoted to her nephew and niece just as she was devoted to her mother and brother. When they went to school she gave them

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a nickel each day until Sarah found out and became very angry, for Sarah herself gave Nancy and Jasper only a penny for spending money and she felt that this gift of a nickel subverted her own arrangement with her children.

"Whose children do you think they are, yours or mine?" said Sarah. "Who is bringing up these children?"

Seymour too became close friends with Nancy and Jasper. He teased them mercilessly, but also played games with them. He invented a version of baseball which could be played with an old football given to Jasper by his father. Seymour was one team and Nancy and Jasper were the other, and the game was played in the long hallway of the apartment. The game was played with an extraordinary passion both by the children and by their young uncle. Meanwhile the racket was such that the people who lived in the apartment below knocked on the ceiling and finally complained to the superintendent. Sarah objected because her hallway carpet was being ruined.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself," said Sarah to her brother, "you ought to be ashamed to play games with children."

She did not understand that the fascination of the children for Seymour was profound and the motive was Seymour's desire to be a child himself. This was the reason that he teased Nancy and Jasper in the way that he did. Nancy proved to be sturdy enough to answer back in kind when he sought to make a fool of her, but Jasper was sensitive to the point of illness and he wept when his uncle said that he was a baby or he tried to hit him.

"Let the children alone," said Sarah and Rebecca, "play with someone of your own age."

Seymour preferred the children. He had a strong hold on them because he had newspapers all the time and the children wanted to see the jokes. When displeased with them and when he wanted them to run errands for him, Seymour used his ownership of the comic strips as a kind of capital which made it possible for him to give the children wages and rewards. He also used the jokes as a means of turning the children against each other, for it often became a question of who was to see the comics first, Nancy or Jasper, and Seymour tantalized the children, exacting concessions and promises from them by raising the question of which of them was to get the comics first. When he was displeased with one of them, he announced that the object of his displeasure was not to see the comic strip at all, and although Rebecca, who was always moved by a strong sense

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of justice, undermined Seymour by promising the punished child her own newspaper when she came home at night, this hardly served to reduce Seymour's power. He had more newspapers, for he bought most of them during the day, and he was at home more often than Rebecca.

There were soon many quarrels between Sarah and Seymour because of the children and because of Seymour's habits. Seymour left wet bathtowels on bedspreads, he left an egg-soiled newspaper on the kitchen table, and he wet the bathroom floor when he bathed. It was also difficult to get Seymour to depart from the bathroom because his baths were of such long duration, he enjoyed them so much, and he read the morning newspaper while in the tub. In these quarrels between the brother and the sister, the mother and Rebecca always defended Seymour and soon there were periods of silence when Rebecca and Seymour would not speak to Sarah. Sarah then told her children not to speak to their uncle and aunt, and though Nancy disregarded this request, Jasper, who was pathetically sorry for his mother while at the same time he disliked her, obeyed her request and tried to avoid his aunt when he went to the school. His aunt saw that he paused on the stair, waiting for her to depart, so that he would not encounter her and she was wounded as seldom before, for she did not know that Jasper took his mother's part only because he felt that his mother was an unfortunate woman who had been abused by his father. Rebecca liked Jasper very much and during such periods she was disturbed by the illusion that he did not like her.

The worst conflict came when, as if inevitably, Seymour took sixty dollars from Sarah's dresser drawer, bet it on a ball game, and lost it. Discovering the disappearance of the money, Sarah immediately accused Seymour of having taken it. Rebecca said that this was not true, for Seymour had never taken any money in direct theft before. When Seymour came home, Rebecca went into the bedroom with him and extracted the truth from him, although Seymour yelled his innocence at first. Then she acted quickly, she went into Sarah's room and asked her if she had looked carefully in the dresser drawer, for perhaps the money had been misplaced. It was after eleven and Sarah had already gone to bed. She was angry that she had been disturbed and she said that her sister knew her well enough to know that she would not omit any corner of the dresser if she thought her money might be there. Rebecca had moved quickly to the dresser and begun to make her own search, speaking conciliatory words to her sister. Jasper, who at that time slept on a cot near his

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mother's bed, had been awakened by the light and he blinked at the scene, knowing what argument had preceded it. Swiftly Rebecca drew her hand from the open dresser drawer.

"Look," she said, holding up a handful of dollar bills, "it was here all the time!" and she gave her sister the money.

Sarah took the money and said, "You put it there yourself," for she was not one to permit anyone to get away with anything.

"It was there all the time," said Rebecca, looking with hatred at her sister, and conscious that her money, as Sarah knew, was being given to her although Seymour was Sarah's brother as well as Rebecca's.

"She does that because she is ashamed that her brother is a thief," said Sarah to her son Jasper when Rebecca had departed. "She is afraid that she will not get a husband if anyone knows that your uncle is a thief. But everyone knows that he is a good for nothing, anyway."

Jasper felt so much sympathy and pain for his mother and his aunt that he was unable to fall asleep for a long time and he felt like crying.

Meanwhile Rebecca damned her sister as she spoke to her mother in the bedroom they shared. Ruth always defended everyone and she defended Sarah by reminding her sister of Sarah's lot, how cruel her husband was to her, and how she needed money, now that Michael gave her just a bare subsistence.

"I need money too," said Rebecca. "I don't have any husband."

"Money is the reason for all the trouble in the world," said Ruth, speaking with a sense of all the years she had known.

When the incident was passed, and all were friendly again, Jasper was sent with Seymour one day to get a haircut. Seymour gave the barber a dime tip, and Sarah became outraged once again, and said that she had no money to give barbers tips, she was a woman deserted by her husband.

"That does not mean that I have to look like a cheap skate," said Seymour. "You told me to take the kid to the barber: next time take him yourself and see what happens when you don't tip the barber."

"I never tip him," said Sarah. "You're just a big sport on your sister's money."

And in fact, Sarah never tipped the barbers for the children's haircuts and she disregarded the gestures of contempt and anger

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which sometimes occurred just as, when a storekeeper refused to sell her a grocery which was on sale because she was not a steady customer and had entered the store just to save a few cents on the one item, Sarah departed from the store with an untouched dignity, not in the least distressed by what the storekeeper had said. She was extremely proud and given to extraordinary anger when her pride was penetrated. She was not moved by such incidents because she began with the idea that she was smarter when she saved money by such devices and she took pride in the fact that Michael, though he seldom praised her, had said:

"That girl can make a dollar go farther than anyone else in the world."

Michael did not know that it was precisely this ability, in which her whole being participated, which made her the kind of a wife she was. Nor did he know that this desire to save money was the same emotion, in all truth, that made Sarah so jealous of the other women her husband went after. Ruth Hart, however, illuminated by her years and her intimate experience of goodness, perceived the complicated truth when she said to her daughter that it was strange that she drove a man who was making so much money from the house and yet at the same time was so concerned about the expenditure of money.

Ruth Hart pointed out that the suitors who came to see Rebecca from time to time were all men who would never be as successful as Michael, Michael was really one in a million. But Sarah justified herself with the hope that Michael would return one day as he had returned before, exhausted by sensuality, pleased to have a home, and in love with his children, if not with his wife. She would then have everything she wanted, a husband who was rich and who was faithful to her, too.

Seymour never spoke with Sarah about her husband, but he questioned his mother like a detective about the latest events in the unhappy marriage. He admired Michael, he detested Sarah, and he felt that he and Michael were men of the world. When he heard that Michael had moved from a hotel to the apartment of his latest lady friend, he was disappointed, for he felt that Michael would have more freedom in a hotel to seek out whatever new companion he wanted.

"Look at you," said Ruth Hart, "you like to have a woman take care of you: why do you think that Michael does not feel like that too?"

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"If I had the money that Michael has," said Seymour, "I would have a man servant."

"I am better than a man servant," said his mother.

Soon there was a new quarrel beween Sarah and Rebecca about the children. Sarah again referred to the fact that the children were hers and not Rebecca's, and that she was not going to let the children be spoiled by an old maid aunt who was overdevoted. Rebecca often referred to herself as an old maid and for this reason Sarah, who did not know or wish to believe that other human beings were as proud as she, thought that it was all right to speak of Rebecca as an old maid.

"Shame on you," said Ruth Hart, "to say such a thing, such an insulting thing! You pick out what your sister is most ashamed of in the whole world and you throw it in her face!"

Sarah cited her sister's own references.

"She says herself that she is an old maid."

"You're smart," her mother replied, "but you have no feelings." It was then necessary for the mother to explain that she did not mean that Sarah had no feelings about herself, she had no feeling for what occurred in other human hearts. Sarah denied this and stopped speaking to her mother. She decided to get a new apartment and to live by herself with her children.

Her mother tried to stop her and she resumed conversation with her daughter as if nothing had occurred. But it was useless. Sarah declared that she would consent to stay only if the amount of rent paid by Rebecca was increased, for Rebecca paid only a third of the rent on the premise that Sarah too was helping to support her mother, and Sarah, as Michael's wife, was really more prosperous than Rebecca.

Sarah moved to a new apartment and Ruth Hart looked with Rebecca for a new apartment and in the end it was the mother in Ruth Hart who decided that she and her daughter and her son would take an apartment in the same house as Sarah. Sarah had been installed for a month on the fourth floor when her sister, mother, and brother arrived on the second floor, and soon Ruth Hart was constantly passing from the second floor to the fourth floor and back, supervising her family. Sarah was not really displeased to have her mother so near, although she concealed her satisfaction. She liked to be alone where no one could tell her what to do or criticize her actions, but it was a comfort to have her mother near her and it made it possible for her to make visits and leave the children alone at home.

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By this time Sarah's hope that her husband would return began to fade. A separation between Sarah and Michael had been arranged by lawyers and Sarah received a monthly stipend which was adequate to all of her expenses and even her desire to save. Sarah felt the amount was unjust because it was not proportionate to Michael's earnings, but when a lawyer advised her to sue Michael for a divorce and thus secure alimony based on Michael's wealth, Sarah refused because she still tried to believe that Michael would return to her and also she knew that what Michael wanted most of all was to get a divorce. His desire for a divorce made Sarah suspect that there was some woman he wanted to marry. Michael when he visited his children mentioned the divorce and on one visit he stopped to see Ruth Hart, asking her to use her influence on her daughter to persuade her to the sensible action of a divorce.

"What makes you think I have any influence?" asked Ruth Hart.

"I know you have a big influence on her," said Michael. Between the son-in-law and the mother-in-law there was an admiration for each other which often made Sarah indignant.

"How can you like anyone who behaves like that to your daughter?" said Sarah. She felt that Michael deserved moral condemnation and she was incensed by her mother's admiration of Michael's masculinity and worldly success, although she herself took pride in the fact that her husband was more successful than the husbands of any of the girls she had known.

"I would rather have a poor man," said Sarah, "who was good to me."

This was not true, but Sarah had no way of knowing that it was not true, because she had so many reasons of mind and of heart for not divorcing her husband. The reason she mentioned as sheer justification was her children's benefit. But her mother told her with tact that her real reason was her fear that some woman would become Michael's wife, if she divorced him. In her own circle the prestige of being Michael's wife remained strong, even though Michael had left her.

During these years, Seymour's idleness became more and more of a burden to his sister Rebecca and his mother. He refused to make any effort any longer to get a job because he had been discouraged so much by his failures.

His friendship with his nephew and his niece increased. He

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played poker for nothing with them and he took Jasper to the ball game once, in a brief week of affluence. Nancy had already begun to go to high school and Jasper was old enough to have long and serious discussions with his uncle, whenever they were on good terms. The one occasion on which Jasper had been taken by Seymour to the Polo Grounds served to make Jasper hope for years that he would be taken again, a hope that Seymour used to secure personal services from Jasper, such as getting him newspapers and cigars downstairs at the stationery store.

"Some day I will take you again," said Seymour.

"What day?" said Jasper hopefully, for he had become as passionate a baseball fan as his uncle.

"I don't know what day," said Seymour. "On the day that I make a lot of money which I never will."

"Yes, you will," said Jasper who at this moment of early adolescence did not like to think that anyone was not going to be successful and rich.

"Don't you think you're going to be rich some day?" Jasper asked his uncle.

"Maybe I will," said Seymour, "but probably I won't. It's just one of those things: I am not the successful type. I've been a failure all my life"—Seymour was now twenty-eight—"and that's the kind of thing that does not change."

Jasper was shocked. At the age of thirteen he was appalled to hear anyone speak of himself as a failure. He was unable to understand the indifference with which Seymour spoke of being a failure.

At this time too Seymour discussed with Jasper Sarah's harshness of nature.

"When you get older," said Seymour, "you will understand that a woman without a man gets that way. She can't help it. Of course, Sarah never had a good heart. But if your father had not left her, you and Nancy would not be nagged all the time."

And then at last Rebecca had a suitor whom she was able to take seriously. Her mother was delighted and impatient. Rebecca too bloomed freshly, although she was no longer the thirty-five years of age she admitted. Her suitor was James Mannheim, a middle-aged dentist who had been married before and who seemed to all a very well-educated man. Seymour did not like James and he said that James was always making speeches. But Jasper was delighted that such a well-educated man might become a member of the family, and Sarah, though she was critical of James, was also impressed. Sarah

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observed that James was a head shorter than Rebecca and the two made an incongruous couple, and her mother, though she agreed that this observation was true, remarked that such things made little difference in the long run. Rebecca and James had met through the mediation of a friend of the family, a man who had made a fortune in dental supplies and who had told James that if he ever wanted to get married again, he knew just the right girl for him, a girl who had a fortune to bring as a dowry and who would make an excellent wife, for she had made an excellent daughter as everyone knew. James was interested in the dowry and he wanted to settle down again. But he feared marriage because his first marriage had been a humiliation. He visited Rebecca and was pleased with her and especially pleased by the extraordinary dinners he was given, dinners which Ruth Hart had labored from early morning to prepare. At these dinners he held forth and explained his views on many subjects to the Hart family, impressing everyone but Seymour, and impressing Jasper more than anyone.

"Just big talk," said Seymour, who did not come to dinner but heard about it from the bedroom where he had secluded himself.

The courtship continued for a full year. James took Rebecca to plays and to the opera, he brought her his books to read, he made much of young Jasper who had long wanted to know an intellectual human being, although he was not yet acquainted with the term, intellectual. Rebecca loved her nephew Jasper and she was touched that he should be fascinated by James at the same time as she felt that her sister's child, a good-looking and well-behaved boy, showed James what kind of children she might have.

As this courtship continued, Ruth and Sarah became impatient, for James did not come to the point of asking Rebecca to marry him, and after all, James was fifty if he was a day while Rebecca was closer to forty than anyone really admitted. If she was to have children, she ought to get married soon. James, however, was perfectly content to be a suitor and Rebecca glowed as never before, excited by the many things that a courted girl did. When the couple finally reached the stage of mild petting in the living room, Ruth in the kitchen listened with a mixture of pleasure and distaste. This was what she wanted, she wanted her daughter to get married, but the pair seemed a grotesque version of the romance of courtship which Ruth believed in at sixty just as she had when a girl of sixteen. And Seymour was displeased without any admixture of joy in his sister's courtship. When Jasper sat with him in his bedroom one

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Sunday afternoon, having come down from his own apartment to discuss the major league pennant races with his uncle, the two heard the sound of loud smacks succeeded by giggles.

"I never heard anything as disgusting as that," said Seymour to Jasper. And Jasper too felt that the sounds of petting were unpleasant, although like his grandmother Ruth he was impatient that his aunt Rebecca get married.

When summer came, a crisis occurred. James proposed marriage at last. But it turned out that he wanted Rebecca to continue to work at the job which paid her such a big salary. Rebecca refused. She explained that one did not get married except to change one's life, and this would be no change for her. More than that, Rebecca wanted her mother to live with her, at least for a time, and James wanted a home of his own. The proposal fell through and James departed, leaving Ruth Hart in tears in the kitchen from which she had overheard the discussion. Her strong will showed itself immediately and she told her daughter that she did not want to live with her, she wanted her to get married. As for Rebecca's job, Ruth told her daughter that they could argue about that after the marriage, for James would change his mind, he would like having his wife at home all day. But Rebecca was immovable. She was not going to work, if she married, and she was going to bring her mother with her.

After a week, James returned. He had decided to accept Rebecca's conditions. He had braced himself for marriage and it was too dismal to turn back.

Ruth Hart announced in triumph the news of her daughter's engagement. The family took a cottage at the seashore and James came to stay with them as a boarder. Again, he was slow in coming to the point of saying when the marriage was going to occur. Ruth became fearful again, for she was often afraid that what she desired would not come true, some disaster would intervene. Meanwhile her cooking reached new heights because of her effort to please James. At last Rebecca forced the issue by bringing James's petting further and further until she was able to tell James that they had to get married soon. James felt the pride of the seducer who does the right thing and this was a very important thing to him. The marriage occurred and Ruth Hart enjoyed a mighty relaxation. Now if only Seymour would make something of himself, she would be satisfied, and if Michael would return to his wife and children.

The depression began two months after the marriage and James who had been playing the stock market lost all of his own savings,

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and much of what Rebecca had given him as dowry was thrown away in an effort to cover the stocks he had bought on margin. Rebecca decided immediately to start a small dress store so that James would not feel that he was supporting her mother and her brother. For the first time Seymour had a job at which he could work at his own hours; he helped Rebecca sell dresses in the store and he worked in the late afternoons and evenings. Rebecca was pregnant and yet sturdy enough to give herself to her new business.

"I always wanted to be in business for myself," she said.

Seymour showed his powers of persuasion as his sister's sales clerk. He was able to kid the customer in the right way by flattering her and telling that she looked like a high school girl. Seymour had always been persuasive but too often he had used this power merely to borrow money for the sake of betting.

Yet the business was not a success because of the depression. And just before Rebecca gave birth to a boy, the whole store front burned down and it was decided to give up the business because now Rebecca had to take care of her child. James had for some time been dissatisfied because Ruth Hart no longer cooked for him the kind of dinners he had been given as a suitor, and he tried again to persuade Rebecca to set up a separate household where they would live alone. Rebecca was clever at putting him off, but his resentment of his mother-in-law became more and more of a compulsion until he said one day that it was his theory that after a certain age, when they were no longer useful, human beings ought to be painlessly executed, as among the Eskimos. James was a man of many theories, but this was unlike most of them. Seymour, hearing this, decided that his mother had been insulted and became furious.

"They ought to put you to death," said Seymour, "you're only ten years younger than Mamma! That's the most awful thing I ever heard anyone say and I've heard a lot in my time."

The quarrel blew over, but the conflict renewed itself, and its true cause was James's disappointment in his marriage which he had expected to be just like his courtship. And now he barely made a living as a dentist, for he had never been a very good dentist and he talked too much to his patients. Rebecca decided to go back to work and she went back, but she had lost her touch, her sense of fashion and vogue which had made her a good imitator. Hence, she had to go back to the work-table of the shop, the job she had started with as a young girl many years before. Yet this helped to support the family and to quiet James, for Ruth Hart was useful in taking care

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of the child, who had been named John and who proved to be a sickly infant. Seymour resumed his old habits, he lost the jobs he was given because of his sister, and now jobs were no longer plentiful and employers were less patient with Seymour than ever before.

Sarah expressed to her friends her extreme admiration for Rebecca, and said that she would not do what Rebecca did for the sake of her mother and brother. But in expressing this admiration Sarah condemned her sister's marriage without being conscious that this was one of her motives in speaking as she did. And she felt perplexed because, in spite of all, it seemed to her that she had made a better marriage than her sister. Michael was the worst kind of husband, but he was not like James who devoted so many of his thoughts to deciding how he might best secure a comfortable life and lessen his own efforts, for as a dentist it was possible for him to choose his own leisure.

Seymour was James's most unfavorable critic. He noted how much James loved a big breakfast, and how slowly he ate, seeming to relish every bite and chew. And he quoted to his mother James's sentence: "To me a good dinner is more important than anything else." But Seymour also liked to eat. He wolfed his food, bending over the newspaper, but there was no doubt in anyone's mind that it was fairly important to Seymour that he be well fed. It was true that Seymour's taste in this as in many other things differed from James and was indeed antithetical, for his liking for pickles, delicatessen, and cake made him dislike the wholesome foods upon which James insisted. So too with James's love of talk. He spoke of very different subjects and he was interested in politics, national affairs, and science, to all of which Seymour was indifferent. He also used the big words, the five-dollar words, as Seymour called them, which had at first impressed the Hart family, for when they were mystified they were impressed, and they suffered from a will to admire James. But again Seymour also loved to talk and he was also a person of theories. He felt that all politicans were crooks and thus dismissed politics from his mind; but his interest in the lives of all human beings resembled the passion of the chess player who reviews or reads about great performances. It was his mother who told Seymour t[illegible] whether he liked it or not it was true that his condemnation of James was touched off by the fact that they were both infatuated with their own desires.

"You are both selfish in the same way," she said, and in her sixty years of life she had learned to discriminate exactly between

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different shades of egotism which she called selfishness.

"No matter what is wrong with me," said Seymour, "I am not a fool."

"Everyone is a fool," said his mother, "practically everyone is a fool."

"Maybe," said Seymour, "but I am not a dumb-bell. That's the kind of fool that James is. Every time something happens he makes a speech about how he predicted the whole thing five years ago. He thinks he predicted everything in the last twenty-five years."

These discussions were inspired by the recurring conflict between Seymour and James.

"Just keep out of his way," said Rebecca to her brother. "Remember it is for Mamma's sake."

Again and again James demanded that Rebecca come with him to a different apartment so that he would not have to endure the daily presence of his mother-in-law and brother-in-law. Rebecca postponed matters, she did not argue with her husband, she knew he would forget his desire to be alone for a time, and that when it recurred, he could again be put off. Seymour made a slim contribution to the support of his mother and himself by means of his new job, the job of collecting the balance on magazine subscriptions. He was paid on a commission basis and it was a difficult job, but it permitted him to work in the afternoons and not in the mornings. Rebecca felt that he had improved to some extent because he did not gamble with the money he had collected. They did not know that the reason was not an improvement in character, but the smallness of the sums and the curious change in Seymour's emotions: he no longer believed in his luck.

(The second part of this story will appear in the next issue.)

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Paris Letter

DEAR P.R.,

I've been trying to get H.J.K.* to write this letter for a week now, but he has all sorts of bureaucratic aches and pains, Official Functions, Categorical Instructions, plus a conscience that doth etcetera, so that there is nothing for it but to write the thing myself. I have a notion, in any case, that you'll lose nothing in the exchange. What with Orwell, Koestler, that fellow in Rome, and K, you've been altogether too much involved in correspondence with Great Men, lately; and everybody knows that the Greater the Man the more monstrous his error, in these curious times of ours.

K, for example, has been misled into reading Hegel, instead of taking me out evenings, and he pretends to be an enemy of the *serious.* But the fact remains that he lives in terror of the Communists, who represent France's awful *souci du lendemain;* and he grows solemn at the drop of a *bonnet rouge.* I, on the other hand, am an ex-schoolteacher, and the first point I would hammer into your collective head is that one cannot be solemn and understand France, in the spring of 1947. "Aye, aye," says K, and cracks his face trying to simulate laughter. Then he whisks a copy of *L'Humanité* out of his pocket and goes gloomily off to read it in the W.C.

And yet, for a housewife and materfamilias like me, reading *L'Humanité* can be a pure and simple pleasure. This was not a gay winter, in Paris, but there was always a headline by Cachin or an article by Courtade, to buck us up. When the butcher shops were empty, the headlines cried: MEAT FOR OUR CHILDREN!! DEATH TO THE PROFITEERS!! When power was turned off, two full days each week, it was: ELECTRICITY FOR THE WORKERS' HOMES! And of course there were the regular headlines, cast in unmovable type: UP WITH WAGES! DOWN WITH PRICES! Meanwhile, the Communist ministers countersigned the electricity cuts and the freezing of wages, and refused—as did the other parties—to take action against the peasants who were speculating on inflation and refusing to send their cattle to market. (The lines are now pretty well drawn in the cities; future electoral battles will be fought in the rural

* H. J. Kaplan, whose wife—Celia Scop—is writing this letter.

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districts, where the CP presents itself as "the most dogged defender of private property," to quote one of its election panels in the Vosges.) Reading *L'Humanité,* this winter, was like reading the *Canard enchainé,* except that one had to supply one's own humor.

For a while, during the Blum ministry, much of this special type of humor disappeared from French political life. The Communists, as usual, were against the government, but this time they were not part of it, so that their opposition had something of a straight face. To be sure, they *voted* for the government, but it has recently become a dictum in this Marxian country that one always votes in favor of that which one opposes. And when the anti-inflation campaign caught the popular imagination, and it became quite clear that practically everyone was in favor of the Blum ministry, everyone voted against it and returned to the coalition set-up which everyone dislikes. This, no doubt, is what *L'Humanité* means by negating the negation. Now, in any event, Pierre Hervé can return to the exhilarating game of denouncing the government which exists only by virtue of his party's support.

I suppose you are impatient with all this gay talk about *L'Humanité's* dialectics and would like to hear something serious, about Paris-in-the-spring, for example. Besides, K told me to keep off the subject of politics, about which French women (whom he admires, the traitor) insidiously pretend to know nothing. Well, Paris is indeed still here and we still like to drive through it at two o'clock in the morning and let ourselves be overwhelmed by its beauty. Ever since Caesar found the Parisii living, I imagine, like so many *coqs en paté* on their charming little islands in the Seine, these people have been busy furbishing and refurbishing their city, creating new patterns out of the old with (despite some errors and many disasters) so happy a blend of conservatism and originality, so constant a sense of form and function, that today we not only like to drive through Paris at two o'clock in the morning, but also to walk through it, bicycle through it, and even buy vegetables in it. Materfamilias though I be, buying vegetables has always left me cold (I hate nature), but buying vegetables in Paris is an excuse for going to the celebrated Rue Mouffetard, which is the best market street in our neighborhood. And now that spring is (hesitantly) here, the Rue Mouffetard bustles and shouts and swirls with such a profusion of good odors and humorous, sensual faces that one almost forgets to look up at the marvelous line of old houses, as the street turns at the Place de la Contrescarpe and winds downhill toward the Seine. This is not the Paris of the postcards, the splendor and grandeur one drives through; it is the Paris of the *petit peuple*; and the one, by the way, would be quite pointless, merely "picturesque," without the other. But I must confess to an inverted snobbery which makes me prefer the handsome quarters when the beau monde is fast asleep, and the Rue Mouffetard (or the

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Rue Montorgueil or the Rue de Clichy) when the *petit peuple* is swarming about the fish-stands and vegetable carts. These Parisians are tired, and their very carriage shows their fatigue. One is staggered at the thought of what they have been through, since the quasi-revolutionary days of the first Blum ministry, in 1936. Nevertheless, the crowds here continue to be composed of individuals: one *sees* an astonishing number of faces. The most insignificant street scene—an overturned bicycle, a housewife trying to get a refund on a pound of rotten apples—collects what the French have rather misnamed an *attroupement*: a group of loiterers (*badauds*), silent, sardonic characters, each with a half-inch or less of dead, yellow cigarette-stub stuck in the corner of his lips, and each prepared, later, to recount the origin of the affair masterfully, to late arrivals; in the group there is usually at least one young wise-guy (*titi*), who makes jokes at the expense of the principals in a broad Belleville accent; and there are always a few good souls whose function is to bring to the fore the resources of the French spirit, to lift the incident from the plane of the banal and the particular to that of the universal: these are the philosophers who argue with quiet (and usually polite) passion about the principles involved in the case of the rotten apples and who never fail to buttonhole the policeman when he arrives. In one of his less successful books, Marcel Ayme begins with an uproarious scene of this sort, but his protagonists are very ill-humored and have to be forcibly prevented from coming to blows. Marcel Ayme is perhaps concerned to show that, in the period he is describing, the temper of the Parisian crowds had grown short, just as the moral world of his hero, in *Le Chemin des ecoliers,* is transformed by the conditions of the Occupation. Duvivier's latest picture, *Panique,* involves the study of a crowd which becomes a lynch-mob. The picture, by the way, is execrable, and one of the minor reasons for its failure to convince me is that I could not even begin to believe in Duvivier's mob. I have yet to see, in this country, a really ill-tempered crowd.

And yet I saw an extraordinarily big one, the other day, when the CGT called Parisian workers to demonstrate on the Champs de Mars. Close to 200,000 members filed leisurely through the *beaux quartiers,* obviously happy to walk in the balmy spring air, and with no very clear idea of what the whole thing was about. I asked one man why he was manifesting and he answered, smiling: *On en a marre, un point, c'est tout* (we're just fed up, that's all). When they reached the Champs de Mars, a great many militants folded up their banners and went home, without bothering to listen to the CGT speakers. The Communists seem to have called the workers out in order to make quite clear—in the midst of the debate on Indo-China—that no French ministry could govern without their permission. The other major parties, however, need no convincing on this point; in fact they are constantly using it as an excuse

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for their own cowardice. But whatever the reasons for the demonstration, it was—when one considers the real grievances of French workers, the abysmally low wages and the constantly spiraling prices, the whole miscarriage of the Liberation—an amazingly good-humored affair.

One cannot conclude from this that the mood of the workers is a happy one, except in the sense that everyone feels happy, after a long and miserable winter, to walk in the sun. I am tempted by the suspicion that the French abandon themselves all the more freely to the pleasures of the spring weather—like the couples who embrace so shamelessly on street-benches—because they find themselves so constantly birked and thwarted in their political and economic aspirations. K tells me that about 600 Renault workers, after dutifully demonstrating on the Champs de Mars, turned in their CGT cards and denounced their union leaders as agents of their employers. (Their employers, in this case, are the government!) And indeed there have been rumblings all over the country against the CGT leadership, which has transformed the French unions into the merest political instruments. The Communists have "supported" every government formed since the Liberation, so that—aside from a few demagogic gestures—their role has been to keep the workers quiet, i.e., to keep their wages constant, while the government floundered vainly in the attempt to hold down prices. Indeed, this is one of the reasons for the strange antics of *L'Humanité,* for in order to keep the workers behind them, the Communists must at least appear to solicit their support. At the same time, French workers have—like everybody else in this country—developed the deep-seated feeling that *ça ne tourne pas rond,* something is rotten in the coalition to which they have been committed. I don't know if the American papers have done anything like justice to the long series of "scandals" inaugurated by the ex-Food Minister, Yves Farge. What is important in all these affairs is that each of them begins by having a more or less incidental political angle and then, very rapidly, becomes *essentially* political. Malafosse, Joanovici, Crestois, Alamichel—all these cases in a country really united by a covenant, a regime consecrated by genuine general consent, would be handled through criminal investigation and the normal channels of justice. In France, there is no covenant, and for at least one group there has been none since the French Revolution. Moreover, all the parties of the Fourth Republic, despite their pre-war roots, have been profoundly transformed by the rise of the CP. It is customary here for anti-Communists to say that the CP is not *"un parti comme les autres."* By this is meant that the fundamental attitude of the CP, with respect to the state and even the nation, is the determination to use them for an end which is alleged to transcend them. Consequently, the CP, even while operating within the system, deliberately places itself outside of it. It

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seems to me that, whatever one thinks of the end invoked by the CP, and of the end toward which its means actually tend, the above description of its fundamental attitude remains correct. What people here do not see, however, is that if the CP is indeed not like the others, the others *become more and more like the CP*. They begin, I believe, by organizing themselves and their propaganda on the Communist model, in order to compete for power and for key positions in the half-nationalized economy. This reorganization, which of course is still embryonic, seems to transform their whole *demarche,* the temper of their militants, their program (which becomes infinitely elastic, according to circumstances), and finally their aim (which becomes exclusive power, in function of nothing but a belief in the party's historical "role"). The Minister of Food opens an investigation into the black market in wine, and the whole press reacts as to an operation against the Socialist Party (in the persons of Gouin and Deffers, Socialist ministers in the *same government!*). The textile scandal turns into a battle over the Communist attempt to colonize the ministry of Industrial Production. The Socialist Minister of the Interior leaves no stone unturned in order to uncover the activities of the fantastic Joanovici, and the Communists see their hold slipping on certain key positions in the Police Prefecture. Meanwhile, *L'Humanité* crows for days on end over the revelation of Hardy's guilt, attempting thereby to discredit the non-Communist and anti-Communist (Frenay) wings of the Resistance. But it is the MRP and the right-wing papers which play up the discovery that General Alamichel worked for the Gestapo—for Alamichel is "Tillon's man" (Tillon is the CP Minister of Air). Each of these cases, by the way, is passionately interesting in itself: the story of Hardy, for example, has more to tell us about the tragic atmosphere of the Resistance, the co-existence of heroism and treachery, the fantastic complexity of motives, the inhuman tension, anguish, and doubt which was, hour by hour, the consciousness of these men, than any deliberate account has been able to tell us so far. (How poor, by comparison, is Sartre's *Mort sans Sepulture!*) But the parties, of course, have no interest in values of this order. When a certain number of collaborators were found hiding in French convents, Albert Camus raised certain general questions about the Church's conception of asylum, etc. But Camus apart, one can distinguish nothing in the hue and cry about this affair which does not refer directly and essentially to the question: are you for or against the MRP?

The other day, a minor weekly published a cartoon showing two Frenchmen, each holding a newspaper before him. One of the men looks over his neighbor's shoulder and says: *"Tiens!* Your paper has one more scandal than mine!" And the editorialist of *Une Semaine dans le Monde* recalls that, in the old days, a well-known Marxist journalist used to speak of Justice and Truth as "metaphysical sluts" who walked the

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streets in the service of the ruling bourgeoisie. "And now that new powers have been installed, in the place of the dethroned bourgeois, this ferocious remark applies rather well to a regime where scandals are *managed* so much more cleverly and productively than the collectivized economy."

K was right about keeping away from politics. I see my space running out and I am painfully aware that I have said nothing about what is going on in this wonderful city where, *par tete de pipe,* more paint is being applied to canvas, more words to paper, more music to eardrums, than anywhere else in the world. I have before me a notice appearing in *Les Lettres françaises,* wherein a lonely lady requests the company of a cultivated gentleman, about fifty years old, and adds: "existentialists please abstain." Last week, André Breton and a group of followers crashed the gate at the Sorbonne, of all places, where *le triste* Tristan Tzara was delivering a lecture on Surrealism and the Post-War. The lecture degenerated into a riot when Breton attempted to interrupt and finally the faithful went off to hold a counterdemonstration in a café on the Boul' Mich. Everybody's in agreement on Cocteau's new play: it's awful. Jean-Paul Sartre is working on a film, to be called *Les jeux sont faits,* after which we expect him to turn his attention to atomic energy (at least). The strange poet, Jean Genet, is presenting his first play to the public next wek, *chez* Jouvet. One of the great literary successes of the winter was a novel by an American named Vernon Sullivan, *I'll Spit on Your Graves,* which after having been rejected by American publishers was translated from manuscript by Boris Vian. It's wildly obscene. Jean Wahl has been running an extremely interesting *College philosophique,* which has attracted great crowds to discussions of interiority and exteriority, the ontological basis of freedom, etc. Vlaminck, who seems to be doing remarkable new work, is nevertheless in the doghouse for having called Picasso a *metèque* and publicly yearned for the good old days of Petain. There's no end to the things I'd like to tell you about, but the fact is that I can't get started, my mind keeps turning back to the political *malaise.*

No, one must not be solemn about it, but it climbs all over one nevertheless. It is quite inescapable, in Paris today. About six weeks ago, the newspapers went on strike (a perfectly absurd strike, and therefore as symbolic as the story I am going to tell) and for the first few days everyone felt the better for it. But after a week or so without newspapers, people began talking about army units moving in on the capital, De Gaulle in Paris, stocks of arms found here and there, the Communists rising in the south, etc., etc. Meanwhile, there were the scandals unresolved and whispered about. There was the war in Indo-China, about which there had been scandalously little news in any case. When the newspapers finally appeared, much weakened financially and

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therefore riper for plucking by the old-line "interests," they were full of news of real civic disaster—and yet everyone felt quite relieved.

And after it became clear that the CP was only feinting on the Viet Nam issue, (a) for the sake of their colonial clientele in the French Commonwealth and (b) to reassure their own party members, people went so far as to say in print that the Communist surrender had prevented civil war, for the time being!

And this brings me to my story, which Merleau-Ponty told K about a week ago. I had hoped, in this letter, to write in some detail about the long study of Koestler which Merleau-Ponty uses (in *Les Temps Modernes,* October, November and January) as a pretext for examining his own political conscience. This study has a peculiar, gruesome pathos, the pathos of a remarkable mind and a fine sensibility desperately struggling to avoid a conclusion which (although finally imposed by intellectual honesty) is obviously repugnant to Merleau-Ponty, i.e., the categorical rejection of Stalinism. Why this conclusion is repugnant to Merleau-Ponty, is chiefly a question for the psychoanalysts, an indiscreet question which I do not propose to raise. But the story he told K is perhaps of even greater significance than his own "case of conscience." It concerns a young professor of philosophy in a provincial town who was suddenly revolted by the Indo-Chinese affair. This man had never engaged in political (i.e., partisan) activity, but he had been involved in the Resistance and he felt that the war against Viet Nam was a travesty on the ideals for which he had risked his life. He was particularly disturbed at the absence of any reaction on the part of the organized groups in his little town: the political parties and press either behaved ignobly or kept silent. Finally, the young professor decided that he would organize a protest meeting. He organized his meeting and then found that no one in town would lend him a hall for it. After trudging all over town, he discovered that the only place in which he could hold his meeting was the local *permanence* of the Communist Party, although the latter was, at that time, unwilling to participate in the event. Merleau-Ponty, I think, told this story in order to show that, whatever its faults, the CP was the only progressive force that did not abdicate entirely in the face of reality. But of course this viewpoint begs the question, which is whether the CP in France or elsewhere can in fact be considered "progressive." If one ends, as I think Merleau-Ponty finally has, by answering that question in the negative, then the story becomes a parable of the *equivoque* which has tragically perverted almost every pure and libertarian impulse in France since the Russian revolution.

Breton's riot in the Sorbonne shows that there are some such impulses which have neither ended up in the *permanence* of the CP, nor been crushed by events. But Breton, of course, has no political role in France today.

CELIA SCOP

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An Approach to Melville

RICHARD CHASE

LET'S SAY that Melville was in certain demonstrable ways an artist, that he succeeded in writing certain great books. This will keep us from being too preoccupied with the Heroic Failure, the Inspired but Frustrated American—the Wounded Titan who lies athwart the vision of so many writers on Melville. Finally, of course, we must consider Melville as the Wounded Titan: one part of his personality *is* like Ahab, the Hero with the wound and the harpoon, and like Pierre, the Hero with the wound and the pen-turned-into-a-pistol. But if we see Melville's works as a whole, a total concept of personality begins to emerge and of this totality Ahab and Pierre represent only one of several parts, one person in a multiple personality which also includes Pip, Ahab's cabin boy; Bartleby, in the short story called "Bartleby the Scrivener"; Benito Cereno; Bulkington in *Moby Dick,* Jack Chase in *White Jacket,* the Confidence Man, and Billy Budd.

Our assumption that Melville was an artist cannot be fully explored so long as we make up our minds about Melville's books from the facts of his life, concluding, because he failed in certain ways, that *therefore* his books are all magnificent botches. It is easy to misrepresent these American creators and culture heroes who crack up in a riptide of alcohol or in an apocalypse of chromium and splintered glass or against the battering-ram head of the White Whale. Melville had his crack-up, in his own Victorian way; and that is our strongest image of him. But we owe it to any writer whom we profess to admire to try the experiment of looking at his books objectively. To begin, nevertheless, with the wounded Hero.

The Maimed Man in the Glen.

Typee, Melville's first novel, is not just the young author's South Sea adventure story, separate in method and meaning from the later "philosophical" novels (which in any case are not philosophical in any strict sense of the word, but, rather, symbolic and allegorical).

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It contains many of the themes which Melville was later to develop. The most striking is what we may call The Maimed Man in the Glen. The hero of the story, who has injured his leg, languishes on a tropical island in the deep, secluded valley of the Typees, a tribe of Polynesians. The valley is a soporific paradise, a utopia for Archaists and Doasyoulikes. Yet there is something menacing or guilty about it. The natives are friendly to the hero and even worship him, as a glamorous object from a distant land. But they are firm in their refusal to let him leave the valley. He begins to suspect them of cannibalism. But glossing over these fears, the hero allows himself to fall into a narcissistic reverie, as monotonous and opiate as the procession of the days and nights. He oscillates between sickness and health, pain and pleasure. He is "unmanned" by the "mysterious disease" in his leg, which he is unable to cure. He is, as we come gradually to realize, symbolically castrated.

In *Mardi* (a fantastic travelogue which can be loosely compared with *Gulliver's Travels*) we discover a young king named Donjalolo. An ancient taboo forces him to spend his life within the dark, narrow defile which encloses his kingdom. Like his ancestors, he must "bury himself forever in this fatal glen." He rapidly changes from a young man of great energy and promise to an effeminate exquisite who flatters his senses with incense and languid maidens and who, to escape the oppressive libidinal intensity of the sun, passes back and forth every day between the House of the Morning and the House of the Afternoon, two dark temples constructed with phallic gigantism out of stone.

Ahab is one of these Maimed Men. He is castrated by his whalebone leg, as Melville makes apparent in the chapter called "Ahab's Leg." The central figure of *Pierre* (the novel which followed *Moby Dick,* in 1852) suffers from an Oedipus complex; he is another one of these heroes—in *Pierre* Melville makes use of etymology in the names of his characters, as Joyce was later to do: Pierre Glendinning means "the stone which dwells in the glen." In *The Confidence Man,* " a kind of invalid Titan" emerges from a "cavernous old gorge" and strikes down a smooth-talking peddler for selling a phony medicine called the Samaritan Pain Dissuader. All of Melville's wounded heroes have affinities with the saint and the savior—with Christ; with Adonis; with the magician; with the *shaman,* whom primitive peoples worship because of the *mana* he has acquired through his neurotic behavior. But in Melville the fate of these heroes, as we see from Ahab and Pierre, is that they rush headlong into violent action,

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betraying whatever is creative within them and submitting themselves to everything that is mechanical, corrupting, repressive, and death-wishing. In doing so they kill themselves and all whose fate is in their hands. They are the Tragic Suicides. But they are only a part of a larger personality.

The Divine Inert.

The Divine Inert, as Melville says in *Moby Dick,* are "God's true princes of the Empire... a choice hidden handful" who are as superior to the Tragic Suicides as the Tragic Suicides are to "the dead level of the mass." They are figures whose withdrawal from the world has been uncompromising and complete and who have gained the spiritual illumination which comes from dying out of life without dying into death. Pip, the Negro cabin boy, has been "mystically illumined" by the terrifying ordeal of being lost overboard: he sees "God's foot upon the treadle of the loom." He is saved from the sea, but he does not emerge from the depths of his own unconscious. To Ahab, Pip now seems "holy." And Ahab banishes Pip from the deck, saying that there is something in him "which I feel too curing to my malady"; he fears that somehow, without meaning to, Pip will dissuade him from the inexorable hunt after the whale.

Bartleby is another of the Divine Inert. An industrious scrivener who works in a Wall Street law office, he gradually becomes a schizophrenic, cutting himself off from the commercial world about him, saying little whenever he is addressed except "I should prefer not to," and inspiring his philistine employer with a sense of religious awe. Bartleby regresses into the shadows of his childhood as relentlessly as Ahab drives himself into outward action against the whale. He dies curled up like a child, a prisoner in the Tombs. "Benito Cereno" is also a story about a man cut off from the world and living in the twilight of consciousness. In this story Melville dramatizes the psychic plight of the Divine Inert by showing us a Spanish sea captain who has been subjected to the will of a mutinous band of slaves aboard a ship off the coast of South America. He is terrorized into a spiritual illumination, a fact which eludes the honest but obtuse Yankee captain, Amasa Delano. The Yankee captain saves Don Benito bodily but fails to grasp the implications of his spiritual plight.

The Handsome Sailor

The aspects of personality we have noticed so far are not mutually exclusive; there is much of Pip in Ahab, for example. The Handsome

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Sailor encompasses and reconciles both the Suicide and the Divine Inert, a kind of synthesis which the dialectic of personality produces out of thesis and antithesis. Yet the figure of the Handsome Sailor remains so inadequately objectified in Melville's books that it cannot fully serve as a synthesis; it is a direction, a motion, as well as an objective reality. At the beginning of *Billy Budd* the Handsome Sailor is pictured as a gigantic Negro wearing a Scotch Highland bonnet with a tartan band—the symbol, as we shall see, of the Promethean Light or the humanizing Intelligence. He is attended by a retinue of fellow sailors, an "assortment of tribes and complexions." Surrounding the superior figure, they move along the Liverpool docks as the lesser lights of a constellation move with the central star. The tribes and complexions, Melville seems to be saying, have chosen to live with the Handsome Sailor rather than, as they do in *Moby Dick*, die with the master who hurls them at the White Whale.

In *Moby Dick,* the Handsome Sailor is Bulkington—the man from the Southern mountains, with "noble shoulders and a chest like a coffer-dam"—who stands at the helm of the Pequod on the Christmas night when she "thrusts her vindictive bows" into the cold Atlantic. But Bulkington disappears from the story, with only a brief farewell from the author: "Take heart, O Bulkington. . . . Up from the spray of thy ocean-perishing—straight up, leaps thy apotheosis!" He must in fact disappear from the story if the story is to go on. Otherwise he would have done what Jack Chase, the Handsome Sailor of *White Jacket,* was driven to do: countermand the orders of the captain and save the ship. Together with Billy Budd these are Melville's Handsome Sailors. We do not see much of them (with the exception of Billy Budd, but he is too complex a problem to consider here). They are direction, force, potentiality rather than completed forms. They are the stuff and energy of an heroic American personality in the act of setting forth toward fulfillment—the Titanic body of America stirring out of the uncreated Night and passing ponderously into motion and consciousness.

Prometheus.

"Prometheus" is the name we may give to the total personality which encompasses the Suicide, the Divine Inert, and the Handsome Sailor. The Suicide is a false Prometheus, false because of the blind violence to which he is driven by his neurosis. The Divine Inert is also a false Prometheus because his compact with death and the unconscious is irrevocable. The Promethean man is he who has

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attained the spiritual illumination of the Divine Inert without losing the capacity for action of the Suicide but whose action is creative—whose action, that is, takes the direction of the Handsome Sailor. To put it another way, he is a man who is able to use the rhythms of life and death toward creative ends.

Withdrawal and Return.

Melville symbolizes the rhythms of life and death in several ways. In these pages I can hardly do more than set them down: sea *vs.* land, valley *vs.* mountain, stasis *vs.* motion, time *vs.* space, narcissism *vs.* genius, dark *vs.* light, night *vs.* day, and so on. In his *Study of History,* Toynbee has subsumed these rhythms under the general idea of "Withdrawal and Return." Briefly, Withdrawal and Return may be described as the passage of the ego from the objective world into the unconscious and back to the outer world. This spiritual transit is the highest manifestation of the basic rhythms of the universe: the alternation of night and day, of death and life, the change of the seasons, the cycle of vegetation. The transit is not automatically productive in the higher forms of life. It succeeds only when the organism emerges on the returning beat of the rhythm transfigured by the ordeal of the journey and in possession of revived potency and "illumination." Withdrawal and Return is symbolized in a great many mythical themes—for example, awakening after a deep, deathlike sleep; the folk-heroes who are beheaded or otherwise injured and magically restored; the death and rebirth of the savior-gods (Christ, Attis, Adonis, Osiris); the banishment and return of heroes like Oedipus; the ordeal of the Arthurian knights in their search for the grail. Toynbee's point, and Melville seems to be making approximately the same point, is that all creativity, whether individual or social, proceeds from individuals who can uncompromisingly embark on the transit of Withdrawal and Return and who, so to speak, can ride out the rhythms without coming into conflict with them.

The Divine Inert fail because they respond only to the first beat of the rhythm.

The Tragic Suicides fail because they allow themselves to be caught and mangled between beats. Theirs is the complex personality which demands to withdraw from the world in preparation for the ordeal of heroic accomplishment on the returning beat of the rhythm. But they are unable to countermand the demonic energy generated by their conflicts which prohibits a decisive withdrawal

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and goads them into violence and negation. As Freud pointed out, the repetitive rhythms of human activity are either creative postponements of death or they are short-cuts to self-destruction. For Ahab and Pierre, they are the latter. The Hero who cannot "withdraw" when the economy of his personality demands that he should, must finally withdraw by committing suicide.

In the figure of the Handsome Sailor we see personality in the act of emerging from the dark night of the soul—the giant Negro with the emblem of Light on his forehead. The particular facts of his future are unknown. But his eventual apotheosis is assured, for he has been able to ally himself with the spiritual transit.

Ahab and the Whale.

But of course the picture is only half complete. So far we have man and we have man transfigured into Prometheus or, to put it another way, we have man a fragment and man complete. There must be an Adversary, a God and Father—a Zeus in opposition to whom Prometheus undergoes his ordeal. Melville almost always regards God as the enemy of man. Moby Dick is God incarnate in the Mechanical Brute, the huge mindless hulk which "god-bullies" the Pequod. He is the challenge which God hurls at man, hoping that in the fight with the whale, man will "unman" himself—that is, undergo transfiguration, not into the image of Prometheus, but into the image of the Beast-Machine. This is precisely what happens to Ahab and it is what constitutes his falseness. Like the true Promethean guardian of humanity, Ahab can shout defiantly at his "fiery father" that "in the midst of the personified impersonal, a personality stands here." Yet caught in the final violence of the whale hunt, Ahab is transfigured into the "impersonal," into the mechanical monster with blood on his brain. He knows well enough what is happening and what is at stake. The idea of the false Prometheus obsesses him. In the machinelike operations of the ship's carpenter and blacksmith he sees himself, caught in the iron hand of his own death-wishing will power, which makes such ready and fatal use of the mechanical techniques of tyranny in general and the whale hunt in particular. He has an almost hallucinatory awareness of an apotheosis looming up behind the blacksmith. The blacksmith is making a new whalebone leg for Ahab, and Ahab, addressing him ironically as "Prometheus," says,

> I'll order a complete man after a desirable pattern. Imprimis, fifty feet high in his socks; then, chest modeled after the Thames

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> Tunnel; then, legs with roots to 'em, to stay in one place; then, arms three feet through at the wrist; no heart at all, brass forehead, and about a quarter of an acre of fine brains; and let me see—shall I order eyes to see outwards? No, but put a skylight on top of his head to illuminate inwards.

It is the abortive transfiguration of Ahab himself, the master of the ship and all the tribes and complexions aboard.

In Melville, then, God manifests Himself as Death, as whatever unmans man. The incarnate Adversary is at once tantalizing and murderous. Man is tempted to forsake the creative Promethean ethos and to imitate the lure of God. Ahab fails because he imitates what is bestial and godlike and thereby fails to imitate what is pre-eminently human. For the rhythm of life out of which issues the Promethean *élan,* he substitutes the mechanical, death-wishing rhythm of the three final onslaughts against the Whale.

As for the comprehensive and pervasive meaning of *Moby Dick,* D. H. Lawrence seems to me to have been right (in his *Classic American Literature*). Melville's theme is the apocalypse and doom of civilization, the whole world hustled to extinction by an American master, the spectacular spiritual-intellectual-emotional failure of the great Prometheus of the West.

Pierre.

The theme of *Pierre* is incest and parricide. Pierre Glendinning, an aristocratic and promising youth, has made a god of his dead father. In the shrine of his heart "reposes the perfect marble form of his departed father; without blemish, unclouded, snow-white, serene." With his proud, handsome, willful mother Pierre enjoys a blissful adolescence. He falls in love with Lucy Tartan, a pure and lovely girl. But then the dark lady of the story enters: Isabel, the daughter of Pierre's father by an illicit intercourse. Overcome with feelings of guilt, Pierre forms an incestuous attachment with Isabel. They flee to New York. Pierre tries to write a great novel. His mother dies. Lucy joins Pierre and Isabel. The two central projects of Pierre's life—his novel and a happy, productive relationship with Isabel—are both impossible to accomplish, given Pierre's temperament, capabilities, and the social system which he cannot escape even in bohemian New York. Yet he drives towards his goal with all the mad zeal of Ahab. The whole thing ends quickly when Pierre shoots his cousin, Glendinning Stanly, who has been trying to rescue Lucy.

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Pierre and Isabel take poison and die in a prison cell. Lucy dies of the shock.

In many ways *Pierre* is a preposterous novel, full of clumsy melodrama and downright bad prose. But there is seldom any doubt that it was written by a great man. And through the murk we can see the scaffolding of an ambitious if imperfect allegory—so ambitious that *Pierre* can be compared with *Finnegans Wake*. *Pierre* has usually been thought of as an unsatisfactory Romantic-period *Hamlet*. But the allegory, once we have spotted it, makes the book far more impressive than that. I shall have to set down the elements of this allegory very dogmatically. As in reading Joyce, we have to recognize several levels of meaning at once. Lucy Tartan, as her first name indicates, is Light or the Promethean fire (thus the symbolism of the tartan bonnet on the head of the giant Negro, mentioned above). Isabel represents Night, Darkness, or the Unconscious. Pierre oscillates between these two figures: they are the opposite poles of the rhythm of Withdrawal and Return; they are less real women than two aspects of Pierre's mother. Pierre means "stone"—that is, he is the Earth alternating between day and night; and he is the human clay to whom "Lucy" gives the creative intelligence and to whom "Isabel" gives the spiritual experience of withdrawal. Caught in a cruel dilemma between the two, Pierre drives on toward the seductive bait of the Annihilating God: the snow-white marble form of his father—Death.

The book has other levels of meaning. For example, there is a kind of aesthetic allegory in which Lucy is the visual principle, Isabel is the auditory principle, and Pierre is Experience or Matter seeking to be transfigured into Art. Again, Lucy is Space and Isabel Time.

Allegory.

At one point in *Pierre* the youthful hero burns a portrait of his father, making a kind of ritualistic sacrifice. This ritual symbolizes the function of allegory in Melville's novels. As Melville writes in his essay on Hawthorne, a morally profound work of art is one which "beginning with the hollow follies and affectations of the world—all vanities and empty theories and forms are, one after another, and by admirably graduated, growing comprehensiveness, thrown into the allegorical fire." Allegory is the fire which consumes the Father—that is, every hypostatization of experience which inhibits creativity and destroys personality. Allegory is itself an hypostatization; it meets the "hollow follies" on their own ground. But it does so without losing

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the Promethean fire and so is able to defeat the "follies," leaving the field to "the all-engendering heart of man."

The Image of Narcissus.

This is important in Melville. It is sometimes touched on in *Moby Dick*; it is the theme of the short story called "The Bell Tower." In *Pierre,* the hero reflects that his cousin Glendinning Stanly, whom he shoots, is "the finest part of Pierre." The shooting of Stanly is part of the hero's suicide (etymologically Pierre Glendinning and Glendinning Stanly—for "stone field"—are virtually the same name). Nearly everyone in *Pierre* is a relative of the hero; even Lucy comes to New York as his "cousin." His mother is himself "translated into another sex." Like a child, Pierre "dabbles in the vomit of his loathed identity." The deaths of Pierre's father and mother, of Lucy, of Isabel, and of his cousin are planetary catastrophes involved in Earth's general suicide. The whole Ptolemaic universe is a mocking hypostatization of the young Titan's ego.

The Confidence Man.

No account of Melville can afford to ignore or underestimate *The Confidence Man.* To begin with, it is a great book (and almost unobtainable in America). It is not at all a chaotic cry of despair but a buoyant, energetic piece of writing, on the whole free of Melville's often clumsy rhetoric. It is even a finished work, if read in the light of Melville's over-all themes; by no means is it a fragment, broken off in a fit of neurotic nihilism, as some writers have dramatically proclaimed. *The Confidence Man* (like *Israel Potter*) is a book of folklore. It is a wonderfully perceptive study of the American character, done at the folklore level, where character is clear and vulnerable. Many of the characters can be found in Constance Rourke's *American Humor*: the Yankee peddler, the Negro, the frontiersman, and so on. Also, the confidence man, peddling phony wares to his compatriots on a Mississippi river boat, is another false Prometheus, Prometheus in a loud American suit. He is a do-gooder, a Progressive in fact, and an emotional-intellectual-spiritual cutpurse. The ironical joke about him is that among other things he sells an Omni-Balsamic Reinvigorator—the life-principle or Promethean *élan,* patented and bottled.

The Larger View.

Melville's books have enough energy, coherence, and intelligence

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to justify our calling the author an artist. At the present stage of Melville criticism that is the important fact. Certainly it is wrong to discuss Melville as a great progressive, an heroic democrat, a culture hero, a noble heart, or a prophet of the good society apart from Melville as an artist—as so many liberal or progressive critics have been content to do. To do this is to make Melville a lesser man than he was, and to repeat the old heresy about art not being connected with life and morals.

Melville's moral intelligence must not be underestimated either. It is wrong to allow our liberal political scruples to keep us from fully understanding Melville's idea of the Heroic American. Is this Heroic American "undemocratic"? Perhaps and perhaps not. The important point is that Melville does not discount the resources of personality. Melville's Promethean Hero is no vaporous or irresponsible extravagance of the Romantic Age. He is elementary psychology for American moralists.

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Poetry

JEWS AT HAIFA

The freighter, gay with rust,
Coasts to a bare wharf of the harbor.
From the funnel's shade (the arbor
Of gourds from which the prophet, without trust,
Watched his old enemies,
The beings of this earth) I scrutinize

The hundreds at the rail
Lapped in the blue blaze of this sea
Who stare till their looks fail
At the earth that they are promised; silently
See the sand-bagged machine-guns,
The red-kneed soldiers blinking in the sun.

A machine-gun away
Are men with our faces: we are torn
With the live blaze of day—
Till we feel shifting, wrenched apart, the worn
Named stones of our last knowledge:
That all men wish our death. Here on the edge

Of the graves of Europe
We believe: truly, we are not dead;
It seems to us that hope
Is possible—that even mercy is permitted
To men on this earth,
To Jews on this earth. . . . But at Cyprus, the red earth,

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The huts, the trembling wire
That wreathes us, are to us familiar
As death. All night, the fires
Float their sparks up to the yellow stars;
From the steel, stilted tower
The light sweeps over us. We whisper: Ours.

Ours; and the stones slide home.
There is no hope; "in all this world
There is no other wisdom
Than ours: we have understood the world,"
We think; but hope, in dread
Search for one doubt, and whisper: "Truly, we are not dead."

RANDALL JARRELL

THE APPARITION

My greetings to you, sir, whose memory,
the striped coat and colors—What is one man?
a man remembered still in the jacket
of his success? of the winning club?
in himself—successful? one man, alone?
This is that he who slights his fellows—
or else, as he is, plunges
to the wind-whipped swirl, hat, coat, shoes
and—as you did—drags in the body
to the grapples defying death and the sea.
Not once but—again!
Is this the war—that spawned you? Or
did you make the war? Whichever, there you are.

WILLIAM CARLOS WILLIAMS

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Nuernberg Altstadt* June 1945

JAMES STERN

MOST OF THE LONG golden evenings in Nürnberg I spent alone. I'd set out in a jeep from the Luisenstrasse to the Old Town, drawn there partly by a morbid fascination, partly because of the feeling that if you live for weeks, surrounded by destruction (knowing you're not, thank God, going to stay there much longer), you may as well familiarize yourself with some of the worst conditions under which the native people exist. I was aware, too, that one constantly recurring question still remained unanswered: If only some 20,000 Nürnbergers had been killed and seriously injured by air-raids, and half of the 400,000 inhabitants had dispersed into the surrounding country, where were the remaining 200,000—or even 150,000—now living?

If the ancient bridges over the Pegnitz had been destroyed, it would have been almost impossible, even on foot, to move about in the Old Town. But for some inexplicable reason they still stood. So did the green pencil-pointed steeples of the Lorenz-Kirche—two of the astonishing number of German Gothic Towers to survive where nothing else had. And in Nürnberg's Altstadt nothing else had. Which is not strictly true. For, as usual—and again no one knows why—a few statues remained. Surrounded by deep craters full of twisted, broken drain-pipes, Albrecht Dürer stood high up, erect (despite a black wound under one eye), like a lonely Saint in his robes of stone. He could not be reached by jeep. You had to climb the tiny foot-trodden paths over bricks and boulders, past a trench, at the bottom of which lay some stinking stagnant water. And there, every evening, under the paint-brushes in the master's outstretched hand, gathered a group of gangsters whose ages ranged from four to eight. They were clothed in rags—or rather, from head to foot they were perfectly camouflaged in filth, so that until they moved you couldn't tell they were there. At sight of you, they scattered in different directions, soundless on their cracked dusty feet, like rabbits over an old warren. They simply disappeared, behind and beneath debris, into holes. If you remained long enough in the same place, they'd emerge again, slowly, like rabbits, sniff the air and stare. And then you'd see that they carried stones or sticks or bars of iron, that their teeth were black and broken, or that they had no teeth, that one had a single arm, another

* This is a chapter from a forthcoming book, *The Hidden Damage*, to be published this year by Harcourt Brace.

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a crutch, and that the only clean spots on their bodies were the whites of their eyes. But when you looked at their eyes a second time you saw that they were not ordinary human eyes, nor like the soft, scared eyes of rabbits, but wild, reckless, fearless, heartless—like the eyes of a famished, diseased leopard-cub, whose one enemy is man.

Stumbling down the hill from Dürer and the young generation of Nürnbergers, you passed the corner of a wrecked alley, where you stopped suddenly and stared again; for here, in the center of what was once Julius Streicher's city, still nailed to its shattered wall, was the ink-blue plaque bearing the alley's ancient name: *Judengasse.*

A few hundred yards further north, picking your way over a smashed bronze breast and arms, over rusty bedsteads, bottomless kettles, and a cracked overturned bathtub, you heard the sound of voices—which was strange, for people did not speak above a whisper in the Old Town. Glancing up, you saw a setting straight off the Elizabethan stage: men and women seated in chairs in a room on the third floor of an old house which had lost its façade. The face of the house—its front wall, windows and all—had simply fallen away; so that as long as warm weather lasted the house's many occupants could sit comfortably in their sitting-room, gossiping in their chairs, surrounded by all their own familiar objects, and pretend they did not know that if they took three steps forward they would fall into chaos.

On every visit to the Old Town I returned to this spot. It was the only place in Nürnberg where you felt a few people were sitting where they'd always sat. Unlikely as it may sound, this "house"—with its interior open to the elements and the human eye—had window-boxes (on the floor, like footlights on a stage) filled with pink and purple petunias; and on a circular table in the living-room, in front of an upright piano, stood a china vase of marguerites and cornflowers. I grew so fascinated by this family's public private-life that I used to stand, hidden by the rubble, and watch them live. With the evening sun turning the whole gaping apartment gold, a heavy big-boned woman would waddle across the crowded room, open a door into the kitchen and light what looked like a kerosene stove. I couldn't believe—from where I stood, a witness to all—that she would return to the door and close it (From habit of a lifetime? To be alone? To shut off the smell of cooking?) but she did. And when she'd placed a pan on the burner, and something in the pan, she slowly, painfully, lowered her bulk on to a wooden chair and, as people are more apt to do when alone, promptly let her chin fall on to her expansive chest. While the family talked and argued and gesticulated in the living-room, a door in the background would open, a blond girl, her hair aflame from the sun, would stand on the threshold, all the heads would turn, and you almost felt like referring to your program to see who the heroine was, in real life.

One evening I scrambled up behind the house, to have a look at

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what these people saw from where they sat, from where I imagined they'd been sitting all the evenings of their lives. And it was this view—rather than the panorama of moonlit horror from the hotel balcony in Stuttgart—which has remained most vividly in my memory. I climbed beyond the level of the house, higher and higher, until I reached the battered Burg, which dominated the city. What you saw from here you could not compare to anything you'd ever seen, not even to a dream, for dreams are too detailed, and here the spectacle was too vast, too overwhelming for the eye to rest on details. I have since seen moving pictures of the remains of Hiroshima. Nürnberg from the Burg bore no resemblance to them, for the Japanese city appeared almost flat, and the German one was nowhere in so clean a state. Nor was it like Stuttgart, for Stuttgart still possessed habitable-looking buildings, some roofs and houses with at least their outer walls intact. From the Burg, to the limit of vision in every direction, and that was a long way with long sight, you saw—with the exception of the Gothic Towers—an endless unbroken brickscape of jagged walls. Months later, back in America, I came across a photograph of the ruins of Ypres, after the First War. It was a dead city, without a growing tree, a human being, a sign of life. Nürnberg looked like that photograph, magnified many times.

But the Altstadt was not a dead city. It was *total beschädigt*—totally destroyed, as the Germans called it, but it was inhabited, and not only by gangsters in embryo. By daylight you could not tell, nor even believe that anyone lived there, because you could not detect any livable space. Nor did you believe that the few people you saw stepping over the debris dwelt in this foul arena. Many of them were not badly dressed, and they looked surprisingly clean. Carrying bunches of wilting wild flowers in one hand, and on their backs a rucksack or a bundle of kindling wood, you presumed they were making a shortcut through the ruins to some more habitable region elsewhere. But you couldn't tell for sure. You could tell human beings lived day and night in the Altstadt only by entering it after sundown, after curfew—an hour when there fell over the desolate scene a weird sinister silence, like sudden death.

In the mauve dusk I used to leave the jeep in the hands of an MP in the Königstrasse, walk slowly through what used to be the Market Place, past the Schöner Brunnen (which, like Eros in Piccadilly, had survived in concrete), and—at a spot where pedestrians had trodden lanes through the mountains of garbage like the lanes the African native makes through the veldt—I'd stand still, and listen, and hear not a sound.

Twice I stood on this spot, hearing nothing and seeing nothing move. But—not content, incredulous of that silence—I came again, this time penetrating a little further into the gloom of the lanes; and suddenly, standing still, holding my breath, I heard, so near it seemed as though it were under my feet, a sound as of many muffled voices mur-

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muring. Since the lane, I reasoned, must lead somewhere, I tiptoed forward. I had covered maybe a couple of yards when the silence was shattered by a cry, the cry of a woman shouting: "*Kartoffeln!* Potatoes!" And on the instant, all about me, the grave-like rubble leaped to life. In the gloom, dark figures appeared from nowhere, scurried like frantic rats over the hills, some rushing headlong into a hole I hadn't noticed, and from which, as I was about to pass it there came, like something solid, the appalling stench of sickness. I stood a few yards from the hole and saw that it was a kind of cave covered over by some canvas and sheets of corrugated iron, that within there flickered the light of one candle, round which I could see the blurred glowing outline of five or six faces, and beyond them, in the background, a dark mass which I took for coats or blankets covering many living, prostrate people.

I walked quickly on, thinking of the witches of Endor, and all of a sudden there came over me the feeling that I was being followed; so I walked faster, stumbling over rocks and refuse, and then I knew that I was lost. So I stopped, stood still, and all round me I could hear the sound as of many muffled voices murmuring. At first, in the darkness, I could see nothing but the rubble and smashed walls, all indigo against the ink-blue sky and stars. Then, right beside me, something moved. I heard a sound like a spoon or fork hitting a plate, and I could see the form of a woman, in a seated position, outside what looked like a small hut.

"Could you tell me where I am?" I asked, and my voice seemed as loud, as sinister as a fog-horn at sea. "Could you tell me how I can get to the Königstrasse?"

"Tcha," a female voice said, "that's complicated."

And she got up and in the dark began giving me the most complicated instructions. When she'd finished, I asked her if this was where she lived.

"Ja," she said, "would the Herr like to see? But, unfortunately, I have no light, no matches. . . . "

I struck a match and followed her over the few yards of rubble to where she had been sitting. Here she bent down and, picking up a sheet of old newspaper, rolled it tight and lengthwise and put it over the dying flame. In the sudden flare of light I saw that she was a woman of about forty, ashen pale but quite good-looking, with a long scar across her forehead.

"Here is my home," she said. "I made it all myself."

You could just manage to enter her home without getting down on your hands and knees. It was like a large dilapidated dog-kennel, made of planks about four feet high, with a sheet of corrugated iron for roof, and another sheet, covered with two overcoats, on the floor.

"That's where I sleep," she said. "And there's my table."

The table was a board, charred black, nailed to four rickety pieces

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of wood, and on the table I saw a hammer, some rusty nails, two plates, a cup, a broken knife, and a fork.

"Are you all alone here?" I asked her.

"Ach ja," she said. "I wouldn't live where those other people live for anything. It's disgustingly dirty down there. And there's no air. It's horrible."

I talked to her for about twenty minutes. Then I left her my matches and went away. Back in my room I wrote to my wife, describing briefly that evening and this particular woman. This was her war history.

> She'd been bombed out of seven different places. Her husband had been killed in a raid; her mother had been killed in a raid; her sister had been killed in a raid; she herself had had four major operations during the war; her only daughter, aged 21, after the sixth bombing-out, had been evacuated to Kiel in February of this year and never been heard of since. Her one son, aged 16, had "gone wild" and kept disappearing. She never knew where he was, and hadn't seen him for a month. For six weeks she had slept in a bunker with 200 others. But she preferred her own company, so she'd made herself this shack in the ruins of the Altstadt. She had one great fear. The ground on which she'd built the shack didn't belong to her. "You see," she said, "I don't *own* my ruin. I don't own anything except two coats and the clothes I stand up in. I'm afraid the people who own this bit of land may come back and turn me out."

Early next morning, a Sunday, I returned to the Altstadt. I stood on the spot where the lanes converged, but I didn't hear any murmuring. I found the hole of the cavelike place where I'd seen the faces in the candlelight; but now, by day, I couldn't see inside. I just held my breath at the overpowering stench. I spent half an hour looking for the shack where the woman lived alone, but I couldn't find it. On returning to the Königstrasse to pick up the jeep, I passed through the deserted desolation of the Haupt-Markt, and out of the silence I suddenly heard the sound of voices singing a psalm. They sounded as sad, as timeless as the sea, as silver-voiced as a trained choir of boys, more beautiful than any singing I'd ever heard before. While listening, I noticed at my feet a small green weed growing out of the ancient battered cobbles, and all of a sudden I felt convinced that man would sing as long as weeds could grow, that however destructive, he was as indestructible as the oceans or the Earth.

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Theater Chronicle

THE UNIMPORTANCE OF BEING OSCAR

ONE OF OSCAR WILDE'S acquaintances wrote of him that he could never be quite a gentleman because he dressed too well and his manners were too polished. The same criticism can be made of his art. There is something *outré* in all of Wilde's work that makes one sympathize to a degree with the Marquess of Queensberry; this fellow is really insufferable. Oscar's real sin (and the one for which society punished him, homosexuality being merely the blotter-charge) was making himself too much at home. This is as readily seen in his comedies as in his epigrammatic indorsement of socialism or his call on a Colorado coal mine. He was overly familiar with his subjects. Shaw said of him that he did not know enough about art to justify his parade of aestheticism. Certainly, he was not intimate enough with poverty to style himself an enemy of riches. In this light, the Marquess of Queensberry's libel, that he went about "posing" as a sodomist, speaks, in the plain man's language, the true word of damnation. In his comedies, it is his audience whose acquaintance he presumes on. Where the usual work of art invites the spectator into its world, already furnished and habitable, Wilde's plays do just the opposite: the author invites himself and his fast opinions into the world of the spectator. He ensconces himself with intolerable freedom and always outstays his sufferance—the trouble with Wilde's wit is that he does not recognize when the party is over. The effect of this effrontery is provoking in both senses; the outrageous has its own monotony, and insolence can only strike once.

In *The Importance of Being Earnest* (Royale Theater), the tedium is concentrated in the second act, where two young ladies are rude to each other over tea and cake, and two young gentlemen follow them being selfish about the muffins. The joke of gluttony and the joke of rudeness (which are really the same one, for heartlessness is the basic pleasantry) have been exhausted in the first act: nothing can be said by the muffin that has not already been said by the cucumber sandwich. The thin little joke that remains, the importance of the name Ernest for matrimony, is in its visible aspects insufficiently entertaining. That the joke about the name Ernest is doubtless a private one makes it less endurable to the audience, which is pointedly left out of the fun. To the

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bisexual man, it was perhaps deliciously comic that a man should have one name, the tamest in English, for his wife and female relations, and another for his male friends, for trips and "lost" week ends; but Wilde was a prude—he went to law to clear his character—and the antisocial jibe dwindles on the stage to a refined and incomprehensible titter.

Yet, in spite of the exhausting triviality of the second act, *The Importance of Being Earnest* is Wilde's most original play. It has the character of a ferocious idyl. Here, for the first time, the subject of Wilde's comedy coincides with its climate; there is no more pretense of emotion. The unwed mother, his stock "serious" heroine, here becomes a stock joke—"Shall there be a different standard for women than for men?" cries Mr. Jack Worthing, flinging himself on the governess, Miss Prism, who had checked him accidentally in a valise at a railroad station twenty-five years before. In *The Importance of Being Earnest,* the title is a *blague,* and virtue disappears from the Wilde stage, as though jerked off by one of those hooks that were used in the old days of vaudeville to remove an unsuccessful performer. Depravity is the hero and the only character, the people on the stage embodying various shades of it. It is deepest dyed in the pastoral region of respectability and innocence. The London *roué* is artless simplicity itself beside the dreadnought society dowager, and she, in her turn, is out-brazened by her debutante daughter, and she by the country miss, and she by her spectacled governess, till finally the village rector with his clerical clothes, his vow of celibacy, and his sermon on the manna, adjustable to all occasions, slithers noiselessly into the rose garden, specious as the Serpent Himself.

The formula of this humor is the same as that of the detective story: the culprit is the man with the most guileless appearance. Normal expectations are methodically inverted, and the structure of the play is the simple structure of the paradox. Like the detective story, like the paradox, this play is a shocker. It is pure sport of the mind, and hence very nearly "English." The clergyman is the fox; the governess the vixen; and the young bloods are out for the kill. Humanitarian considerations are out of place here; they belong to the middle class. Insensibility to the feelings of others is the comic "vice" of the characters; it is also their charm and their badge of prestige. Selfishness and servility are the moral alternatives presented; the sinister impression made by the governess and the rector comes partly from their rectitude and partly from their menial demeanor. Algernon Moncrieff and Cecily Cardew are, taken by themselves, unendurable; the meeching Dr. Chasuble, however, justifies their way of life by affording a comparison—it is better to be cruel than craven.

Written on the brink of his fall, *The Importance of Being Earnest* is Wilde's true *De Profundis;* the other was false sentiment. This is hell,

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and if a great deal of it is tiresome, eternity is, as M. Sartre says, a bore. The tone of the Wilde dialogue, inappropriate to the problem drama, perfectly reflects conditions in this infernal Arcadia; peevish, fretful, valetudinarian, it is the tone of an elderly recluse who lives imprisoned by his comforts; it combines the finicky and the greedy, like a piggish old lady.

Fortunately, however, for everyone, there is a goddess in the play. The great lumbering dowager, Lady Augusta Bracknell, traveling to the country in a luggage-train, is the only character thick and rudimentary enough to be genuinely well-born. Possibly because of her birth, she has a certain Olympian freedom. When she is on the stage—during the first and the third acts—the play opens up. The epigram, which might be defined as the *desire* to say something witty, falters before her majesty. Her own rumbling speech is unpredictable; anything may come out of her. Where the other characters are hard as nails, Lady Augusta is rock. She is so insensitive that the spoken word reaches her slowly, from an immeasurable distance, as if she were deaf. Into this splendid creation, Wilde surely put all the feelings of admiration and despair aroused in him by Respectability. This citadel of the arbitrary was for him the Castle; he remarked, in his later years, that he would have been glad to marry Queen Victoria. Lady Augusta is the one character he could ever really imagine, partly, no doubt, because she could not imagine *him*. Her effrontery surpasses his by being perfectly unconscious; she cannot impose on the audience for she does not know they are there. She is named, oddly enough, after Bracknell, the country address of the Marchioness of Queensberry, where Wilde, as it turned out, was less at home than he fancied. The irony of the pastoral setting was apparently not lost on the Marquess of Queensberry, who arrived at the first night with a bunch of turnips and carrots.

Jean Cocteau, it is said, has modeled his life on *The Portrait of Dorian Gray*. If this is so, one cannot help but feel that *The Eagle Has Two Heads* (Plymouth Theater) was written by the Albright portrait. Grandiloquent and lurid in the old-fashioned royalist mode, this story of a poet and a queen suggests that the attic of Cocteau's mind was never as smart as the downstairs: a schoolgirl was there all along reading romances and trying on costumes. "Dressing up" has been, all along, M. Cocteau's subject; the romantic temperament in *Thomas the Imposter, Les Enfants Terribles,* and *Le Grand Ecart,* revealed itself as an heroic fraud, a shabby and magnificent lie. The beauty of these works trembled in the equipoise between truth and falsity; comedy was the predicament of his suffering figures, an irony enforced by the age. In *The Eagle Has Two Heads,* the tension has broken, posturing is no longer serious; it is solemn. The eagle is *not* double-faced.

MARY MCCARTHY

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Film Chronicle

THE ANATOMY OF FALSEHOOD

THE BEST YEARS OF OUR LIVES presents an optimistic picture of American life, and of postwar America in particular, making suitable reference to such accepted symbols as democracy, the American character, the American way of life, etc., with the object of impressing the spectator with the dignity and meaningfulness of "typical" American experience (his own experience) and making him feel a certain confidence that the problems of modern life (his own problems) can be solved by the operation of "simple" and "American" virtues, while at the same time—though more indirectly—he is given a sufficient sense of the gravity of those problems to prepare him, if possible, to meet his "responsibilities" —which, so far as they are defined at all, seem to consist of the obligations to be patient and work hard (not to ask too much of life) and to face the future cheerfully.

The ideas on which such a movie rests are accepted readily enough as public symbols—that is, as accustomed stimuli calling for certain orthodox responses of no great intensity—but they will not bear serious examination and they cannot be made to emerge forcefully from any true presentation of reality. Since it is precisely the function of a "serious" movie to reaffirm and intensify these ideas by giving them concrete expression, the problem of technique is to embody them in a structure of character, plot, and background that is so real in detail as to be accepted, more or less continuously and unreservedly, as truthful, and so complete and self-contained as to engage the spectator's full attention and discourage any tendency to look beyond the fixed boundaries. The degree of artistry displayed in solving this problem seems to be what determines whether such a movie is successful with the educated and discriminating audience, for that audience (generally speaking) is distinguished not by any real unwillingness to accept the basic Hollywood myths—which are simply the basic American myths—but merely by a distaste for the cruder dramatic and ideological conventions ordinarily used to express them.

Thus, the success of *The Best Years of Our Lives* as a major document in Hollywood's picture of America is attributable to the unusual care that has been devoted to the reality of the surface. The camera, above all, catches the exact appearances of the metropolitan back-

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ground: the orderly and impersonal comfort of an upper middle class apartment, the hard surfaces of a bank, the ugly and cheap profusion of a chain drugstore, the plain facts of a street—all photographed simply as what happens to be really there, without sympathy or revulsion, without "tricks"—almost, in a sense, without art, if one were not conscious all the time of how much arrangement has gone into this matter-of-fact detail. One recognizes everything and in the end this recognition is all the excitement, for what is on the screen becomes finally as accustomed and undramatic as the shabby décor of the theater itself. The actors, too, are so manipulated as to become embodiments of the physical reality of human beings. More clearly than the important events of the plot, one remembers how the actors hold their bodies: Teresa Wright slouched over a stove, so much like a real woman over a real stove that the scene can become almost unpleasant, as it was certainly not intended to be; or Fredric March and Dana Andrews quarreling across a table, with their muscles set, two stupid men acting as they think proper in what they conceive to be a moment of drama—this, too, was not intended, but the physical appearances have so strong a hold on the director that he is himself exactly on a level with his material: he sees how everything must look, but frequently he cannot see what it really means.

The dialogue follows the same pattern. Whatever is said is as close as possible to what people are likely to say; not *these* people, particularly (they have little individuality), but people in general, Hollywood's imagined American and everybody's possible neighbor, a little less infantile than Hollywood usually makes him (since this is a "serious" movie), but just as uncomplicated and predictable as he might appear to be (but probably would *not* be) if he were a real person on any real street. I do not recall that any character ever says anything that is particularly interesting in itself and that could not just as well be something else, but the talk is always quite real, except in two or three mawkish attempts at eloquence.

All this makes most of the movie flat and boring, unless one is ready to accept its pretensions or to delight in its mere virtuosity. What you see always has a certain interest because it is so recognizable, but what you see is all there is; each character announces himself immediately and in full, each situation is immediately and completely understood. This does not mean that everything is explicit, but the suggestions are kept strictly within limits: at any moment, whatever is meant but not stated is only one thing and is always clear. (I saw the movie a second time and found only occasional details of realism that I had missed, but no new meanings. This is significant, for one expects of a movie that exhibits so much talent and technical mastery that it should be almost infinitely suggestive, as *The Informer* was, for instance,

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or *Modern Times,* or even such unpretentious and disorganized entertainments as the movies of the Marx Brothers.) This disciplined clarity is used to control the explosive possibilities of the subject: where every statement is complete, clear, and limited, it can with less difficulty be made false. (The more Hollywood "matures" and tries to live up to its responsibilities as a major expression of our society, the more we shall see of this empty and extremely skillful precision. *Boomerang* is the most recent example, somewhat more acceptable than *The Best Years of Our Lives* because the actual limitations of its subject are more in accord with the limitations of the realistic technique.)

The falsehood has many aspects, but its chief and most general aspect is a denial of the reality of politics, if politics means the existence of real incompatibilities of interest and real *social* problems not susceptible of individual solution. The choice of subject is itself an evasion of politics, for the "veterans' problem" is not an issue, or at any rate it is a false issue, since nobody is against the veterans and since they do not constitute a social group, except temporarily and very vaguely. And even the rudimentary elements of politics that have in fact attached themselves to this problem are excluded from the movie: there is no mention of veterans' organizations, for instance, or of any general economic insecurity (one of the three main characters has to hunt for a job, but it is assumed that this is merely a matter of getting properly "located" somewhere at the bottom, working hard, and starting the automatic climb up the economic scale). Nor is there any hint of the veterans' harboring bitterness at what they have been forced to go through or resentment at those who stayed home (a minor character is in fact set up as a target to encourage this kind of resentment in the audience: "With all these veterans coming back," he says in fussy and effeminate tones, "*nobody's* job is safe!").

A conscious effort is made to show that class differences do not matter. The infantry sergeant is a banker in civilian life ("Don't 'sir' me," he says to one nervous applicant for a GI loan, "I'm a sergeant"); the Air Force captain has been a soda-jerker, living with his workingman father in a miserable slum. The two men are presented as culturally equal: the soda-jerker can call the banker's wife by her first name and eventually marry the banker's daughter; this, too, is made possible by the technique of presenting everything as a surface, for the social equality of bankers and soda-jerkers *is* real—on the surface. (But both men are made culturally superior to the third veteran, the sailor from the lower middle class, who has been neither a banker nor an officer.)

In addition to these obvious evasions and distortions, the chief means of concealing the reality of politics is to present every problem as a problem of personal morality. (This device seems to be common to all forms of political obscurantism: when we are asked to feel guilty

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about the atomic bomb, for instance, or to take thought of "our" grave international responsibilities.) For every difficulty, there is conceived to be some simple moral imperative that will solve it, at least to the extent that it can be solved at all. Thus the problem of the monopoly of capital is reduced to a question of the morals of banks: if bankers are good men, then they will grant small loans (not large loans, apparently) to deserving veterans (those who are willing to work hard) without demanding collateral. (This is "gambling on the future of America"; the small loan is apparently conceived to be some kind of solution to the economic difficulties of capitalism—cf. *It's A Wonderful Life.*) And the veteran has a corresponding obligation to be grateful: "God bless you!" says the simple and reliable farmer whose application for a loan has been approved.

The makers of the movie are obviously happiest—and also most successful—in dealing with the sailor, who has lost both hands in the war and must go through life with a pair of hooks. His problem is at least quite clear, and the necessary moral patterns have already been established in a hundred movies: virtue for the sailor consists in assuming that his girl will marry him only out of pity and a sense of obligation; virtue for the girl consists in "really" loving him, so that the loss of his hands can make no difference. This moral deadlock can always be broken, and it is broken here, in an extremely affecting scene. (Everything about the sailor is especially affecting because the part is played by a man who really did lose his hands in the war. There was nothing else to be done, I suppose, but this is one of the elements that help to make the movie spill over into the real world, carrying its falsehood with it.) There is one very uncomfortable scene, when someone raises the real question: What did he lose his hands *for?* But the man who raises this question is made personally repulsive and, apparently, a fascist sympathizer, so one does not mind seeing him knocked down and the American flag plucked from his lapel (unless one is sufficiently at odds with the movie to realize that this is done not because he is a fascist but simply because he has put his finger on the really sore spot that no one is supposed to notice). Thus the political question of the sailor's hands is dealt with very easily, and the war comes safely back to the realm of simple morals: "We were pushed into it," says the unpleasant man. "Sure," the sailor replies, "the Germans and the Japs pushed us in!" And we in the audience, remembering all the time that this man has really lost his hands, can breathe easy: he does not begrudge his sacrifice.

A secondary element of some interest is the movie's sexual pattern. Since the starting-point of the story is the veterans' need for "readjustment," the sexual relations of the characters form an unusually clear projection of the familiar Hollywood (and American) dream of male

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passivity. The men are inept, nervous, inarticulate, and childishly willful; the women are strong, dignified, wise, and forgiving. The women are to serve the men, care for them, and comfort them. (The captain's wife, who stands in the way of his marriage to the banker's daughter, is the one "bad" woman, and her badness consists essentially in being less instead of more mature than her husband; she is a problem and she should be a mother.) For each of the main characters, there is a scene in which the woman he loves undresses him (partly or completely, depending on whether the couple is married or not) and puts him to bed. And when it is the sailor who is put to bed, the dream becomes almost explicit. He is the man (the real man) who has lost his hands—and with them his power to be sexually aggressive (this fact is lightly emphasized a number of times). Every night, his wife will have to put him to bed, and then it will be her hands that must be used in making love. Beneath the pathos of the scene (certainly the most dramatic scene of the movie), one feels a current of excitement, in which the sailor's misfortune becomes a kind of wish-fulfillment, as one might actually dream it: he *must* be passive; therefore he can be passive without guilt.

ROBERT WARSHOW

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Books

PERSONAL HISTORY

THE FORGING OF A REBEL. *By Arturo Barea. Reynal & Hitchcock.* $5.00

THE TWENTIETH-CENTURY WRITERS hover over their work like nervous mothers, and if they write about themselves, they hover over their own personalities. They exert ruthless control over their work, and allow it little spontaneity or internal development. They are in this respect radically different from the masters of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries who worked as literary deists: once set in motion, the latter's situations and characters developed a free movement in which their creator's personality did not intrude. But most contemporary writers seem unable to achieve this self-effacement even when they wish to; they are too self-consciously aware of the relationship between themselves and their work; and their personalities often serve not as the refractors of their created image, but as the image itself.

To this contemporary tendency, Arturo Barea is a refreshing exception. Though he has written an autobiography, in which form one expects the writer's personality to be central, the I of the book is its least important figure. Things happen to him; his senses register; but he neither manipulates his past nor attempts to give it retrospective order. He merely allows his laden memory to flow freely. The center of the book then becomes a city, Madrid; and since the twentieth-century history of Madrid reflects the transformations of Spanish civilization—the never completed transition to modernity so painful in backward countries—what would otherwise be a mere atomized and indiscriminate sequence of recollection acquires more general validity.

Even when writing about his private concerns, as in the movingly scrupulous description of his neurotic paralysis before the issues thrust upon him by the 1936 civil war, Barea succeeds in making them seem a symbolic fraction of the tragedy which struck Spain and Europe. The result is a book fringeing on the first rate, a work of social autobiography which, if not history itself, contains the ores from which history is fused, and which bears a palpable, sensuous quality seldom present in formal historical writings.

Through Barea's unforced recollections of his childhood in Madrid there appear the gradual social reformations of modern Spain: a slug-

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gish middle class in disintegration, a cohering proletariat scenting the western winds of Marxism and in part responding with an indigenous anarchism, the product of its position as a militant class in a primitive country. The inns; the gutters; the washwomen at the rivers; the static peasants, bearing in themselves the richness of an old civilization; the impatient counterpoint of Madrileños hemmed in by a dying past and a stillborn future—all of this, the actual material and substance of life unthinned by theory and unsorted by perspective, filters through his recollections.

The course of Barea's life coincided with the central events of modern Spain. As a youth, he served in the colonial army in Morocco and his account of the disastrous expeditions against the Moors (as impressively dry and bare as the desert in which these expeditions took place) is an addition to the literature of anti-imperialism. The Spanish army lives in his book as a remarkably corrupt institution; a pure chain of pilfering from general to batman. One senses in this long section on Morocco, the best in the book, all the decay and putrefaction which was to reach its tragic head in 1936. (And one cannot help wondering how a man like Barea, with his first-hand knowledge of colonial imperialism, could accept the policy of his party, the Spanish Social Democracy, which when in the loyalist popular front coalition did nothing to grant freedom to Morocco. But *that* is the tragedy of Spain . . .).

Reading this massive work, one is reminded of an Elder Breughel with its movement of differentiated but not thoroughly individualized figures in which no attempt is made to accentuate but in which the action is so inviting and warm that the spectator finds himself merged with its context. Much the same sympathetic inclusion is effected by Barea's book, which lacks only that sense of purposeful control that gives a Breughel its unity. And that is where Barea pays for his greatest weakness: his lack of concern with ideas. Absence of self-consciousness permits a rich recollection, but the selectivity essential to form demands a highly trained intelligence as well.

If Spain is vivid in the book, Barea is dim. Between his personal history and the movement of the book there is a disturbing lack of harmony. At each crucial juncture of his life, the book blacks out. At one moment a child, the next a man; at one moment apolitical, the next a socialist. The personal biography is like a series of jerky slides from which the decisive ones have been omitted. But the book is redeemed by its vision of Spain's tragedy, by now a symbol of our age.

I cannot leave it, however, without saying a few words about Barea's politics. He nowhere attempts an ordered discussion of Spanish politics and since his few political remarks are commonplace, they might be

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passed in silence—except for one consideration.

Barea was one of those gray murky middle-class Social Democrats who made of his adherence a means of avoiding rather than of engaging in political thought. Not until his wife, a dissident Austrian Socialist, began to receive visits from the GPU did Barea even become aware of the role of Stalinism in Spain. He vaguely recalls Stalinist frame ups of dissident revolutionists (the POUM, anarchists, and Trotskyists) but blandly admits he paid little attention to them. Even when the GPU drove him and his wife out of Spain, they decided not to publicize their treatment at the hands of the Stalinists because of attachment to the conception of . . . unity.

This phenomenon of a political activist of the "left" uncritical of either Social Democracy or Stalinism, that is, a "left" politician not concerned with political ideas, must be considered an important reason for both the Spanish defeat and the victories of Stalinism in Europe. One can no more dabble in politics than in any other discipline—less so, in fact, for irresponsibility and sloppiness in art usually implicate no one but their agent, while in politics they can cause damage to whole peoples and generations. How many others were there in Spain who did not even try to think through in an organized and rigorous manner the problems facing the Spanish revolution? How many others were there who drifted to disaster in the Social Democratic muddle and in the name of unity (that phrase which is the first refuge of weak minds!) shut their eyes to Stalinist totalitarianism? For here Barea's wonderful receptivity to impressions and sensuous phenomena was not enough; here thought and system were required, revolutionary precision and intellectual thoroughness. If men like Barea are at last appalled by the power of Stalinism, let them look to their own past for part of the explanation. One always pays for indifference.

IRVING HOWE

SARTRE'S THEATRE

NO EXIT *and* THE FLIES. *By Jean-Paul Sartre. Translated by Stuart Gilbert. Knopf.* $2.50.

SARTRE HAS DEFINED his theater as one of "situations," rather than of "characters." By this he means that its purpose is to present on the stage precisely what for him is invariable: the condition of man, expressed in the conflicts that are eternally common to human experience. Sartre's man, by the fact that he defines himself only by his acts, is infinitely variable. Consequently, the analysis of an individual character, if he is abstracted from the conflicting systems of values and rights which make up his condition, and paraded on the stage as the totality of his psychological traits and nothing more (as a miser, a coward, a misan-

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thrope), or as the expression of a passion, is of no value to the spectator because the character does not touch upon his true preoccupations.

Sartre is concerned with putting on the stage certain universal situations, in which his characters make their choices as free men, that is, in which they choose their own being. More exactly, Sartre's aim is to lead the spectator to *participate* in those choices. This notion of participation can have one of two implications: either an ethical, or a therapeutic one. Sartre would reject the former, since for him there is no absolute morality, no ethical frame of reference, from which basis the playwright can point out the good choice from the bad one. It seems that Sartre's intentions are purely therapeutic. In an article in the June 1946 *Theatre Arts,* Sartre states, "We believe our theater would betray its mission if it portrayed individual personalities . . . because if it is to address the masses, the theater must speak in terms of their most general preoccupations, *dispelling their anxieties* in the form of myths which anyone can understand and feel deeply."

An apparent contradiction to this idea of cathartic participation is Sartre's interest in increasing the distance between spectator and spectacle. "To us a play should not seem too familiar," he says. "Its greatness derives from its social, and in a sense, religious functions: it must remain a rite; even as it speaks to the spectators of themselves it must do it in a tone and with a constant reserve of manner which, far from breeding familiarity, will increase the distance between play and audience." But, less pretentiously, keeping the image of man's conflicts at a respectful distance is probably also meant to increase the liberty of the spectator. If Sartre's plays were so horrifying, so close to the audience's immediate sufferings, he would no longer be proposing freely to a free spectator, but he would be imposing by fear on a defenseless public.[1]

The Orestes-Electra plot of *The Flies,* and the *No Exit* hell in a Second Empire salon are, then, "mythical" situations—no open stock-pattern symbols, but the embodiment of eternal conflicts of rights and values. The fact that these situations are not *realistic,* in the classic sense, keeps the participating public at least at first row balcony distance. *The Flies* is an easier play in the matter of participation: Orestes has two concrete alternatives, either to play yogi or to kill. No conflict could have been clearer to the play's original audience, in a German-occupied Paris—and if Orestes' choice needed simplification, Sartre was there to supply sufficient polemic dialogue. Sartre's point is inescapable: Orestes kills Aegisthus and Clytemnestra, the forces of enslavement, with a

1. This is what Simone de Beauvoir termed "aesthetic rules," in a recent talk at the Museum of Modern Art, in New York. In this connection, it is interesting to consider how useful such theatrical rules can be to Sartre, whose work is essentially cerebral. With or without the justification of his theories, Sartre's cold and highly convoluted intellect restricts communication between playwright and audience.

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moral justification he invents himself by the very act of murder.

The myth of *The Flies* is the myth of exile. Orestes returns to Argos, as a man yet undefined, a face without features, an exile, for he possesses and is possessed by nothing. "You've left me free," he tells his tutor. "You've left me free as the strands torn by the wind from spiders' webs that one sees floating ten feet above the ground. I'm light as gossamer and walk on air." Free, yet limited to two choices; to turn back, or to liberate, by murder, the people of Argos. Orestes is the existentialist hero; his aim is liberty in that he makes his choice as a man of "good faith," neither hiding behind the excuse of his passions, nor pretending that his murder was predetermined by fate. He emerges, in anguish, but without regrets. Electra, on the other hand, weakens when at last she sees that "wisp of steam" rising from the "split bellies" of the king and queen, and loses herself and her freedom in an agony of self-deceit. The existence of Zeus suddenly becomes a truth for her (and who can blame her, when there he is, on stage, beard, miracles and all). For the free man, Orestes, Zeus's presence is unimportant. His liberty, despite the gods, is simply the presentation of the hypothesis: "Even if God existed it would change nothing." (Whether he exists or not, everything is permitted.) Zeus is an accessory illusion for men of "bad faith," and little else.

The *No Exit* situation is a far more ingenious myth. Life is over for the criminal trio in their drawing-room hell—the choices have been made, the cards played. *No Exit* is a complete vision of life, while *The Flies* is a continuum, life *"en sursis,"* in reprieve, with new choices to be made, new values to be created, more anguish to be breathed. *No Exit* is ingenious, because Inez, Estelle, and Garcin can be regarded as both dead and alive. Alive, they are thrust into a universe, a room without egress, a "false situation," in which there are *others*. This is the primary consideration; man only exists in relation to other men.[2] Garcin is drenched in guilt, not because he knows he is a coward, but because Inez and Estelle are looking at him, because they are his mirrors in a mirrorless hell. Hell means the impossibility of indifference—Estelle, Inez, and Garcin possess each other. "To forget about the others? How utterly absurd," says Inez. "I feel you there, in every pore. . . . Why you've even stolen my face; you know it and I don't."

No Exit is also the tragedy of the dispossessed, that is, the dead. The three are permitted to watch the living judge the value, the meaning of their completed lives. A tormented Estelle sees the young man, who once called her his "crystal girl," judge her crimes with a shrug. Garcin listens to his old friends tag his life with the word "coward," then forget

2. "The other looks at me, and, as such, he holds the secret of my being, he knows that I *am*; thus the profound meaning of my being is outside of myself, imprisoned in an absence; the other has an advantage over me." *L'Etre et le Néant*, p. 430.

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him. By indifference, those on earth make them die again. "I've left my fate in their hands," says Garcin. "To be dead is to be the prey of the living," says Sartre in *L'Etre et le Néant*. It is the final victory of the others.

This brief and brutal play deserves to be considered in other terms than these inadequate interpretative ones. As means to a philosopher's ends, *No Exit* is certainly successful, as theater it is a work of enormous talent. Sartre's theatrical genius is partly in his technique; that tense, intense dialogue torn from characters who, in life, would be burdened with the incommunicable. Submerged in the grotesque, they name their crimes, and speak their anguish. Despite Sartre's expressed disinterest in psychology, *No Exit* is a piercing psychoanalytical study.

Unfortunately for the American reader who does not have the French text at hand, Stuart Gilbert is obviously irresponsible as regards Sartre's stylistic brilliance. For example, *"Nous voici, nus comme des vers,"* becomes "Now you have us in the nude all right." As for *The Flies,* the combination of slang and extraordinary beauty of dialogue is almost completely lost in Mr. Gilbert's dullard English—and with it goes most of its value as a work of art. PATRICIA BLAKE

THE WORLD AS INFERNO

THE TOWER OF BABEL. *By Elias Canetti. Translated by C. V. Wedgwood. Knopf.* $3.50.

THE THREE TITLES of this book specify its vision of evil: *Die Blendung* it was originally called, in the English edition *Auto-da-fé,* and now *The Tower of Babel*; on those three levels of metaphor it apprehends our predicament: as hallucinatory displacement, as immolation by fire, as failure of communication. The specification of our world as Inferno has become so commonplace a concern of recent novelists (the generations brought up to the heresies of Optimism and Progress have compulsively to assert Hell, and our being in it, over and over), that we wince a little at the prospect of yet another fable on the theme. But this is essentially an honest vision, translated into a sound and autonomous fiction; I mean a fiction verifiable point by point as experience and perception, not completely reducible to the total revelation of alienation and corruption that prompts it.

First of all, there is a thick, literal sense of Europe between the wars (the book was first published in 1935), of the City (our hells are inevitably urban), the terrible seediness of the pawnshop, the dive, the police court, the hotel corridor, the streets where ennui waits the cue to become terror. It is into this world that Peter Kien, Sinologist, is thrust from the quiet alienation of his study, after his gesture at human engagement, the sudden marriage to his cretinous housekeeper. He emerges into it quite mad, but is, in a sense, at home among its less spectacular derange-

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ments; he is its meaning, more legibly inscribed: its incapacity to know reality, the disjunction at its heart between what it dreams and what it becomes; its anxieties that confess the poorly-kept secret of its wish for self-destruction.

The monsters he encounters in society do not contradict his nightmares; his most abominable fantasies of guilt are generally, symbolically true; and, most horribly, the world finds it possible to do business with him, to make profit of his madness. The Jew (as Hunchback, physically the symbol of his special inner alienation) can make his delusions a racket; the Woman (as Skirt, the blue bivalve of her dress) can pawn his abandoned books; the Cop (as Peeper and Pincher of Thighs) can inherit his bed.

The conflict of private fantasies that makes society demands the hallucinated prophet. Peter Kien's hallucination is a touchstone: his delusive vision of his wife's death, consuming her own flesh, is a Utopian truth, ideally more accurate than her actual fate: to share a bed with the sadist gendarme. And the fire he foresees throughout, that we have all come to see, is more than the fire he sets in the end, burns more than his 25,000 books.

There is, of course, no private cure for his ill. The psychiatrist, our customary *deus ex machina,* this time at least fails. In the novel, the brother of the victim, motivated by an envy of, a longing for insanity, hopelessly balanced in a disordered world, he can only by his fumblings speed the holocaust, and return to his dreams of the Madman as Swain.

The chief flaws of the book inhere, I think, inevitably in its *kind* of judgment of experience. It avoids the grosser pitfalls: a furtive enjoyment of the horror it explicates, or a self-indulgent surrender to its symbols, the elegant stylization of madness that mars such a book as *Nightwood.* But since will and belief, the minimal intervention of effective reason, are necessarily precluded, the characters are always on the verge of dissolving into the flux of their velleities and anguish, of slipping below human concern; in the end pity is inhibited, horror, to some degree, baffled.

Moreover, the scrupulous resolve of the author to suppress his own voice in the story, confuses the intent of the section headings which assert his presumable point of view: "The Head without a World," "The World without a Head," etc., clear indications of a large symbolic reference. We are impelled to translate his meanings from literal to anagogical, but are given no specific clues beyond the background presences of Mencius and Confucius who, from the first page, preside over the doom of their expositor. In the end we hesitate: are we to accept an implied Mencian analysis, that where the Intellectual refuses the leadership of the people and the people are without a fixed living, disorder and evil result; or is the intention a larger irony, to suggest behind the phantasmagoria of actual evil the noble falsehoods of the Chinese

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sages, with their assertion of man's radical goodness and inherent rationality: the ultimate madness of the dream of sanity.

LESLIE A. FIEDLER

THREE STORIES

THREE. *By William Sansom. Reynal & Hitchock.* $2.50.

IN THESE THREE new stories by the young English writer, William Sansom, the parts are more impressive than the whole, the language more original than the characters, the casual details more striking than the larger conceptions, which is merely to say that Sansom is neither better nor worse than most serious writers of his age. He is certainly to be praised, I think, for his poetic and generous sensibility; on every page there are bright and genuine touches that one honors even when one is dubious about the final development of the story.

"The Cleaner's Story" is a rather daring attempt to go beyond the insufficiencies of the anecdotal method in order to make more ambitious comments upon life. The narration is assigned to a cleaning woman who scrubs the floor of a bar in a provincial French town. She, quite literally, lives on her knees and the town and its actions take place on a higher plane; she knows the people in the bar by their feet and their voices; life falls down upon her from above in a way that reminds one of Kafka's "Investigations of a Dog." There is a fine spatial sense in the story, but, once that has been established, the action is disappointingly predictable and the characterizations are incomplete. The cleaning woman herself, having been formerly a gentlewoman, has also, one might say, dropped to the floor from above, a fact that makes her pathos a special case, vaguely operatic, like the Russian noblemen reputed to be driving taxis in Paris. Her spiritual problem, as Sansom presents it, is to create an entire world out of her scrubbed and unscrubbed squares, to unite herself completely with the floor and to exclude the gossip and life going on above her since attention to the latter can only make her isolation more painful.

If I am correct in interpreting Sansom's hopes for this story, I should say that the trouble is due to the misused influence of Kafka. Kafka's genius depends upon the miraculous *rightness* of his situations which, for all their eccentricity and superficial narrowness, always contain the possibility for limitless, significant variations and constant surprises. The first thing one notices about a Kafka story is that it can go on forever and the first thing one notices about most Kafka imitations is that they are immediately exhausted. In this kind of writing the author is easily seduced into exaggeration of the symbolic value of his material, particularly if the chosen fictional situation has, as I believe to be the case with Sansom's cleaning woman, limited symbolic potentialities to begin with. More is asked of the irony of the prone position

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in which the woman does her work, her abstract placement in life, the philosophical overtones of cleaning, than can, in my opinion, be intelligently maintained.

"The Invited" concerns itself with a problem so old and one used so many times by all sorts of writers that we know it must be a real problem, and yet the very familiarity of the theme makes enormous demands upon the writer to say something new, even, if you will, something sensational. The theme of "The Invited" is the effort of a rich man to get to know the poor. Once again Sansom records the usual contradictions in the attitudes of both classes: the poor feel resentful toward the rich and yet hope to be "invited" to the other side even if it means repudiation of their own people; the worker who gets authority may be as tyrannical as the owner, etc. The tone of the story is compassionate and serious, but the characters are as stiff as figures in a morality play. Even the rich man who from pity and humanity wishes to escape the irresponsibilities of his class is not so much a character as an argument. The atmosphere of the story is projected with remarkable skill and the cinders, dust, noise, and machinery that surround the life of the industrial poor remain in one's mind after the characters are forgotten.

"Cat up a Tree" is a very short piece, placed between the two long stories. Its intention is small but the story is quite successful and shows Sansom to be capable of a delicate humor that would not have been out of place in the longer pieces. ELIZABETH HARDWICK

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ANYTHING GOES

FYODOR DOSTOEVSKY. *By J. A. T. Lloyd. Scribner's.* $3.50.

THE AUTHOR of this latest biography of Dostoevsky is so little in command of his material and intellectually so much below the level required for evaluating it that the result is nothing less than grotesque. The book is badly written, particularly so in the passages of critical comment, which are muddled in the extreme. Actually one can speak of Mr. Lloyd's "critical comment" only in a Pickwickian sense, since whenever it comes to discussing Dostoevsky as a literary artist he is so patently at a loss for ideas that he is forced to pad out not a few chapters with synopses of novels that everyone has read and with lengthy quotations of dialogue which, again, serve no useful purpose except to fill space.

The literature dealing factually with Dostoevsky's life and work is very extensive; most of it is in Russian and German, languages with which Mr. Lloyd, who depends entirely on English and French texts, is evidently unfamiliar. And his acquaintance even with the inadequate sources at his disposal is meager, for he makes no use (or mention) of such standard biographies as those by Yarmolinsky, Carr, and Troyat. (Thus for want of facts he bungles the story of Dostoevsky's affair with Polina Suslova, fully and accurately recounted both by Yarmolinsky and Troyat.) What he mainly draws on is the antiquated biographical study by Evgeni Soloviev, translated into English some thirty years ago, and Aimée Dostoevsky's book about her father. Though Mlle. Dostoevsky is a notoriously untrustworthy witness, her opinions and onesided constructions are none the less quoted at great length without questioning, including the passage in which, impelled by vulgar snobbery and spitefulness, she gives a muckraking account, altogether false, of Tolstoy's family history in order to make more credible, perhaps, her fanciful appropriation of an aristocratic pedigree for her own family.[1]

Also, this author is the victim of the philistine idea that in writing about a great man one is in duty bound to make everything about him appear noble and great. Contradictions bother Mr. Lloyd, and he prefers not to recognize their existence. Thus in trying to refute the political charges made against Dostoevsky, Mr. Lloyd states that he was never a

1. There are even worse lapses, as when Mr. Lloyd mentions a story by Dostoevsky called "The Twins" (p. 31). Of course, no such story exists. The error can be traced to Mr. Lloyd's careless reading of Soloviev's study, where the title of the early story *Dvoinik* is for some unaccountable reason translated not as "The Double" but as "The Twins." It is perfectly clear from Soloviev's context which story is meant, for Golyadkin is named as the hero of it. Yet Mr. Lloyd speaks of "The Double" and of "The Twins" in the same paragraph, as if they were separate works.

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pan-Slav "in the real sense." The fact is, however, that Dostoevsky's *Diary of a Writer* is full of the most extreme pan-Slav propaganda, especially in the essays relating to the Russo-Turkish war of 1876-77. In this respect it is interesting to compare Tolstoy's wonderfully alert and just appraisal of that war (in *Anna Karenina*) with Dostoevsky's expressions of enthusiasm for it—an enthusiasm which led him to undertake a polemic against Tolstoy in his *Diary*. Mr. Lloyd ignores the fact that in his political writings Dostoevsky went beyond pan-Slavism to assume the position of a Great Russian imperialist; he did not hesitate to speak of "the absolute necessity of subjugating Asia," an exploit which he envisioned as preliminary to an armed incursion into the western states. Nor is it true, as Mr. Lloyd blandly assures us, that Dostoevsky is wrongly regarded as an enemy of Poland. There is scarcely another Russian writer—above the level of the run-of-the-mill patrioteers—who abused the Poles as coarsely as Dostoevsky did (*cf.* the gratuitously malignant portrait of Grushenka's Polish suitor in *The Brothers Karamazov*). Of course, it is mostly the publicist rather than the creative writer in Dostoevsky who is guilty of chauvinism and national hatred. Leo Shestov was entirely in the right when in his essay "The Gift of Prophecy" he remarked that the political ideas to which Dostoevsky committed himself in his *Diary* "have the mark of rapacity upon them: to grab, and still

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to grab." In politics, Shestov added, "he is forced to go in tow of others who compared with him are utter nonentities, and he goes." The truth is that this classic novelist of psychic dissociation, who surpassed all others in his mastery of the theme of the double, was himself the victim of the malady he so frequently described; and his double was a peculiarly nasty one. This second Fyodor Mikhailovitch was very adept in mimicking the Christian pathos of the first Fyodor Mikhailovitch—the pathos of universal love and of man's absolute freedom to choose between good and evil—all for the purpose of aggrandizing his own and the Russian ego generally at the expense not only of the Poles but of Jews, Germans, and Frenchmen as well, and of justifying predatory wars for the greater glory of the autocracy and the Orthodox Church.

Of course, the political content of Dostoevsky's work is by no means exhausted by these reflections. His writings are profoundly related, and in a positive no less than in a negative sense, to the disruptive processes in Russian society which culminated in the October Revolution. Yet Mr. Lloyd make no effort to establish any sort of correlation between the revolutionary process and the movement of Dostoevsky's thought. Nor will you find in his book any recognition that psychoanalytic ideas may with some degree of relevance be applied to the study of Dostoevsky. Here the author takes the position, by now canonized, of the respectable critic who will have nothing to do with such horrors. Where is the evidence? he asks. The evidence, Mr. Lloyd—quite apart from Dostoevsky's personal experience, which abounds in Freudian motives—is in *The Brothers Karamazov,* the greatest novel ever written on the Oedipal theme. One might think that a professed student of Dostoevsky would at the very least have examined Freud's essay on him. But no, nowhere is any serious attempt made to analyze, let alone disprove, the Freudian argument.

From long experience one has learned that the ways of publishers are inscrutable. Still, one cannot but wonder what motives the present publisher could have had in bringing out this book, which is far and away the worst of all the biographies of Dostoevsky available in English.

PHILIP RAHV

A SIGN OF WORTH

THE MOUNTAIN LION. *By Jean Stafford. Harcourt Brace,* $2.75.

JEAN STAFFORD'S second novel is a work so finely designed and so meticulously executed as to put to shame most current fiction. With it she achieves, seemingly in a single, confident stride, a control and fluency of performance for which *Boston Adventure* was only a faltering, sleepwalking kind of rehearsal. *The Mountain Lion* is on the whole so satisfactory that I want in this note to document only my praise of it.

It is nearly impossible, in a book as well-made as this, to distinguish knowledge from presentation. To begin with, Miss Stafford *knows*

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the particularity of the external world which her two children Ralph and Molly Fawcett inhabit so completely that her picture of it is at every point as full as it can be, and yet at no point is this reality the *subject* of her writing. (In this respect, as in others, she goes beyond her first novel, in which she was often at the mercy of the setting she attempted to use, entangled in her own stage props.) For example: she reproduces the speech manners of the genteel "Bonney merchants" and the sanguine "Kenyon men"—opposing tribes between which her children are torn—with absolute aural fidelity, yet with such variability and indirection that their verbal quirks are never obtrusive, but always quietly enhancing and right. She was "tired to death" of something, one of the Bonney merchants says of herself, obliquely, and the words are so skillfully embedded in their context that it is an almost shocking pleasure to hear them in the mind, after the context has moved on, and with them the precise echo they raise (for me, at least) of the language my parents used, the flat, downright, unwillingly expressive speech of a generation ago.

On another plane, Miss Stafford is so perfectly in command of the internal landscape of her children as well, that she almost never exhibits it directly or deliberately, never spends herself in random virtuosity, but is content to reveal this landscape partially and steadily through linguistic gesture—the whole dense aggregate of texture, emphasis, pace, intona-

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tion, *plus* emotional intent, which her style admirably brings together. Thus she is able to convey very clearly, in the facile, free-shifting gait of some passages, the remorseless inconstancy of a child's mind—easily distracted, easily consoled. Moreover, she is able to maintain an all but unbearable atmosphere of calamity throughout the book by these linguistic means—quite apart from the children's dialogue and the actual events, themselves incredibly violent. So unremittingly does she bring pressure through the language itself, through the narrative tension which mounts and mounts as the degree of circumspection lessens, through the speech-figures which grow more and more importunate, closer-spaced and clamoring as the book proceeds, that the climax, when the train plunges into the tunnel and Ralph and Molly "hear the devil speak," really seems the answer to an intolerable need. And the catastrophe which follows—a cliché in terms of the plot—is urged and justified over and over by these same subjective means, till at last it comes as a relief, the only possible ending to such outrage.

Finally, Miss Stafford *knows* and demonstrates that she knows, at what seems to me the highest level of all, where the interior and exterior realities combine to tell a truth about the self. That *The Mountain Lion* may have a sexual interpretation is clear; it is also possible to see it as a parable of the spirit's growth: self-mutilation self-redemption. What matters more is that the symbolic structure here is a manageable one and one organic to the material; here the truth told is at once the product and the principle of the children's experience, and of their sensibilities as well.

In an extraordinary series of poetic devices through the last pages of her book, Miss Stafford uses color imagery to show—by literal descriptive detail, by verbal nuance, by symbolic implication, each modulating the others and being itself modulated—the evolving nature of self-awareness. It is *gold* like dreams of jewels and treasure, *topaz-yellow* like the eyes and body of desire, *yellow* like time stopped at appalled confrontation, and *evil, yellow* like the twilight after pain sets in. These images—in their proper setting—are a concentrate not only of *The Mountain Lion*'s theme, but of its method and its success: they are simple, consistent, and inexorable; their color is, and has always been, a sign of worth.

CATHARINE CARVER

KAFKA'S COLLECTED WORKS

FRANZ KAFKA: GESAMMELTE SCHRIFTEN. *Herausgegeben von Max Brod. Band I: Erzählungen und Kleine Prosa; Band II: Amerika; Band III: Der Prozess; Band IV: Das Schloss; Band V: Beschreibung eines Kampfes. Schocken Books.* $15.00.

SCHOCKEN BOOKS and Max Brod are to be congratulated on this superb new German edition of Kafka's collected works. The five volumes now at hand comprise the three novels and the complete short

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stories. Five more volumes are promised for the near future, including two volumes of diaries, two of letters, and one consisting of aphorisms and fragments. The first collected edition of Kafka contained no more than six volumes, of which only one volume was composed of diaries and letters. Clearly, the additional material now being prepared for publication will heighten our understanding of Kafka's personality, both from a creative and biographical standpoint. One hopes, too, that Brod, the conscientious and devoted editor of Kafka's writings, will now avail himself of the opportunity to make public at long last the exceedingly important—because of its length and detail—*Letter to My Father,* so far known only in the form of brief extracts.

That this new edition is indispensable to all students of Kafka goes without saying. All the volumes contain informative editorial notes; of particular value are the appendices to the three novels, which contain unfinished chapters, variant readings, and passages discarded by the author. None of this material is to be found in the English editions. It is important to note that *The Castle,* in this latest version, continues for sixty-six pages beyond the point where the narrative comes to a stop in the English translation. In these additional pages K.'s hope and bafflement are further portrayed in several significant episodes. In the appendix to *The Trial* there is a good deal of material which enhances our knowledge of Joseph K.'s circumstances and character; and the two chapters printed in the appendix to *Amerika* carry forward the description of the hero's captivity in the fantastically cluttered-up establishment of Brunelda, that great slob of a Circe, in whom erotic and comic features are combined in a way that makes her one of the most engaging and insinuating of Kafka's creations. P.R.

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Variety

A Cato of the Cruelties

RAYMOND CHANDLER has, in the past, written for the *Atlantic* on the ethics of Hollywood, just as the late Wendell Willkie once wrote on ethics in general for *The American Scholar*. There has been enough respectability in the wares of these two successful specialists in the American ethos to suit the upper-middlebrow market, and enough authenticity in their attitudes to cover the objections of litterateurs.

Philip Marlowe, private dick, is our myth, the closest thing to flesh and blood that Hollywood has recently seen fit to apotheosize. Who, then, is this Marlowe and what is his mighty line? To be solemn first, Philip Marlowe is as much of the existentialist hero as modern America has stomach for. We've become used to the French version, but the term, like pragmatism, means a *way* of philosophizing rather than a body of doctrine. It's a fruitful term, and we should try to salvage it from the purely cultic interpretation that is threatening, through fear more than anything else, to discredit its legitimate use. Marlowe is the American middle-class Existentialist, the People's Existentialist, you might say, insofar as his function cuts across class lines. The marks of his integrity are a searing doubt as to the motives of his fellow countrymen—popularized by Bogart with literary antecedents in Lardner and many others—and a profound awareness of fate. But the red badge that sets him apart is an almost Biblical faith in the value of decision. He is forever rolling the stone uphill—a little too sentimental and self-pitying for a true Stoic, but an existentialist nonetheless. Whatever the alternatives, Marlowe acts and acts alone: his life is all decision—a blind inevitable moral energy plowing through the wildest ambiguities always into the heart of insecurity and danger.

Marlowe's world is the laissez-faire liberal world turned inside-out—a jungle of predatory creatures making amusing patterns out of their guilt and boredom, and desperately lonely. On the surface, nothing happens for obvious reasons. If external amiability isn't faked, it's at least better to assume so until told otherwise. Underneath this casual cruelty—the convention set by Cain, Hammet, et al.—move the tides of human destiny and decision, as crude as the surface is intricate and ambiguous.

The Marlowe epics screen better than they read, and I suspect it's because Chandler strains too much in the books to be arty, although he is often brilliantly successful in patches. His conventions admirably suit the movies where the camera, if it's alert, establishes the proper sense of desolation—that miasmic, Dantesque background of California roadways, police stations, office buildings, and fake in-

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teriors in which Chandler specializes.

We have come a long way from Holmes to here. The plot is complex and we are still thrown a few clues from time to time, but suspense grows now out of a human rather than a literary situation; it is continuous rather than cumulative, like life in a Camus novel or in modern "crisis" theology. Our hero is no longer the wizard, the mental giant, the latter-day Paracelsus: he is not even the intellectual master of the situation. Where Holmes needed all the glamor he could muster to make Victorian respectability seem worth an elaborate defense, Marlowe lives by the light of his sentimental but genuine humanity: he's the fall-guy, *der reine Narr,* Parsifal-Cassandra whom nobody believes because he has no aces up his sleeve.

In another of his functions, that of father-confessor, he departs radically from the fiction detective tradition. His goodness is obvious enough to become a catalyst in a corrupt society—the great strength that is intended to compensate for his lack of subtlety and the conventional insouciance. Everyone confesses his basic sickness as well as his immediate troubles to Marlowe. In the current Chandler film, *Lady in the Lake,* for example, the weak capitalist, in Marlowe's healing presence, is strong enough to throw over his vicious secretary and confess his loneliness; the crooked cop can't look at Marlowe without a self-revealing yen to "work him over"; the old people confess their utter exhaustion and fear; the slick playboy knocks Marlowe cold for telling the truth, but is soon recompensed by being shot full of holes in his shower by a former sin; and finally, we have the vicious secretary herself, still the superb, capable American Girl whom we have come to know so well from

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the tradition that starts, perhaps, in Henry James and enters the crime milieu in Nora of *The Thin Man,* but is omnipresent in such creatures as the wooden young lady in *All the King's Men,* and Isabel Bolton's final hypostatization as the "European" paragon of *Do I Wake or Sleep.* The Girl is Marlowe's greatest challenge and his greatest conquest; to her, like Hamlet to his mother, Marlowe "must be cruel, only to be kind"—the therapy of harshness which Marx also prescribes for our bourgeois ills.

A comparison of Marlowe's state of mind and that of the follower of Marx would be suggestive. Both have the attitude of a Jewish prophet toward a bad world: both are proximately tough to counter a degenerate laissez-faire that has learned to use sham-morality brilliantly, but both are ultimately tender and apocalyptic. I don't claim to find any political sophistication in Chandler: I merely suggest the implications of his theory of man, which he would doubtless deny. Leftism in general, insofar as it has popular attributes in America, seems to have settled temporarily on the *PM* level of pervasive general "concern" mixed with a folksy, sexy assertion of man's finiteness and dependence on nature. It's a mixture too usually dismissed by the exacerbated intellectual who, however, welcomes the image of Marlowe as a sign of "vitality" in the movies.

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